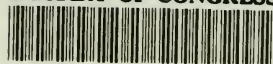


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• "Loafin' around from place t' place
'Long the crick or the gris'-mill race."

Your Folks and Mine

By

John D. Wells

Author of

"Swazy Folks," "Old Good-by's and Howdy-do's"

With Drawings by

Emil Strub

Published by

Otto Ulbrich Co.

Buffalo, N. Y.

1913

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To

MY FATHER

WITH WHOM I SHARED THE INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE OF

"YOUR FOLKS AND MINE"

THIS BOOK OF VERSE

IS

DEDICATED

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“Your Folks and Mine”

THE HOMECOMERS.

GOSSIP? Yes, if you call it that,
Settin' here where we gethered at
Years ago—t' recall again
Folks an' things as we knowed 'em then;
Spots an' faces that like as not,
One or other—or *both*—fergot!
Loafin' around from place t' place,
'Long the crick or the gris'-mill race—
Paths, no odds where they twist an' bend,
Lead us away to some old-time friend.

What 's the difference? an' who be you
Anyway, askin' our right t' do
Just as we please, or t' talk about
Anyone here worth the *layin' out*?
Folks our memory records show—
Harelipped folks that we used t' know,
People, mebbe, with asthmay, itch,
Fambly troubles an' wens an' sich!
Why, t' talk of 'em seems t' me
Is ours by right of *priority*!

The Homecomers

Who be you t' deny our right
Gassin' wherever our fancies light?
Talkin' of folks that we used t' know
Hereabouts in the Long Ago?—
Where they drifted an' what befell,
Wonderin' too, if they 're doin' well,
Who they marrit an' where they be!—
Goin' backwards in memory,
Stoppin' wherever our Fancy strikes!
Gossip? Yes—*that a feller likes!*

ELISHER'S SMILE.

ELISHER—he 's our hired man—
Allows there ain't no better plan
Of circumventin' woes an' cares,
Than smilin' when y' come downstairs
An' lives up to it, square an' blunt,
Like general run of preachers *won't!*

Elisher smiles an' before you know
The rest of us is smilin', so
Ketchin'-like it is! My law,
It flits from him to me an' ma,
An' then across to Uncle Dri,
Or Mairy Ellen mebbe; why,
I 've even seen it set the pup
A-waggin' 'fore the sun was up!
Then bimeby, as like as not,
Some man will pass that 's mebbe got
A mortgage that his crops can't fetch,
But like enough the man will ketch
Elisher's smile an' drop his frown
An' tote the smile away to town,
An' peddle it, where, bein' wuss,
The people need it more than us!
The feller at the gris'-mill gits
The speerit of the smile—it flits

Elisher's Smile

Across an' through the blacksmith's door,
An' breezes through the general store,
Then out ag'in, an' wreathes, doggone,
Whatever face it fastens on!—
Because Elisher's smile is jis'
As ketchin' as the pink-eye is!
An' then the feller brings it back
At night along the back'urds track,
An' scatters it on either side
The County Road, both far an' wide,
Until by time when we get in
From work, the smile is back ag'in!
Back home ag'in!—an' seems t' bless
Elisher for his cheerfulness;
“Because you smiled,” it seems to say,
“The world has had a holiday!”

ROSES.

ROSES, roses, old-fashioned roses,
The soft-tinted kind an' the yeller—
The kind that reach up from the dew-beds an' noses
The hate from the heart of a feller;
I 'm speaking especial of home-lovin' roses—
There 's none of the kind we call *boughten*
Compares with the old-fangled, gold-spangled posies
That breathe of old loves we 've forgotten.

Roses, roses, somethin' about you,
Your smiles or the blossoms you sling us,
Why summer could never be summer without you,
And the color an' perfume you bring us;
The path that leads home seems t' kitter an' wander
Through mem'ry—we never could find it,
Except for the scent of the bloom that leads yonder,
An' your loose-lyin' petals that lined it.

Roses, roses, old-fashioned flowers—
You ain't so stuck up nor so *tony*,
But you sweeten the lives an' you sweeten the hours
Of old-fashioned fellers that 's lonely;
If a man 's got an *eye* an' a man 's got a *smeller*
To use—if there 's anything noses
Most everything bad from the heart of that feller,
It 's roses—they old-fashioned roses!

ON THE OLD TOWN PLAYGROUND.

WHEN the old boys meet the new boys where
the old boys used to play,
There 's a banishing of sorrows that have marked the
tortuous way—
There 's a waning of ambitions that have lured a
wand'rer on,
And a happy-sad returning to the days we feared were
gone!
There 's a twisting of the wrinkles into happy Boyhood
smiles
Such as wreath remembered faces peering down from
Otherwhiles—
There 's the wizardry of Mem'ry that the feelings
must obey,
When the old boys meet the new boys where the old
boys used to play.

When the old boys meet the new boys on the tiny
village square,
There 's a hand, denied to mortals, seems to marshal
mem'ries there,
And, as though the chums of Boyhood had n't really
grown to men,
Is the cherished playground peopled by forgotten
friends again!

On the Old Town Playground 7

In the smile of this or that one lives a chum we used
to know,

In the laughter of another rings a lilt of Long Ago!
It 's a finer, better pleasure and a sweeter, sadder day,
When the old boys meet the new boys where the old
boys used to play!

When the old boys meet the new boys! Ah, but
children cannot know

'Til they watch their sands and prattle of the dreams
of Long Ago!

They can never see the shadows of the children gone
from there

That return and romp beside them through the little
village square!—

They can scarcely sense our feelings, nor can under-
stand the spell

That their presence weaves around us as we watch
them play, nor tell

Why our bearded chins may quiver as we sigh and
turn away,

When the old boys meet the new boys where the old
boys used to play!

THE FAMBLY

WHEN winter 's at, an' nights are dark an *six*
o'clock is *eight*,
An' mother 's cleared the table off, we gether 'round
the grate
An' pa will say: "Did y' ever read that Riley rhyme
about
'The Early Days'?" an' ma says: "No; I'll get the
volume out;"
An' then pa reads that homely rhyme about ol'-
fashioned years;
The puncheon floors an' open doors of them ol'
pioneers;
An' when he reads of them that 's gone "An' sleep
on Bethel Hill"
The shadows seem to deepen an' the settin' room
grows still—
Ma takes his hand an' bows her head an 'fore the
poem 's through
Sis 'll cry,
An' mother cries,
An' pa, he sniffles too!

"An' here's another," pa'll say, "entitled 'Specially
Jim';
I like it 'cause my brother Tom was mighty lots like
him;

A reckless feller, people thought, but they misunderstood,

For them that knowed him better knowed he's nothin' else but good."

An' then he reads that tender rhyme about a father's love—

The kind o' love that lots o' folks jist can't make nothin' of!—

An' reads of how the boy went out the time the army was,

An' never worried folks ag'in, or bothered 'em because

They laid him in a hero's grave beneath the sod an' dew,

An Sis 'l cry,

An' mother cries,

An pa, he sniffles too!

An' then he takes an reads the ones that's fav-o-rites o' mine—

The one about the little boy with "curv'ture of the spine,"

An' t' other one on Tiny Tim, the crippled boy, who done

The world a heap o' good with his "God bless us ever' one".

An' so we go, a-follerin' them tender lines o' his

That picture sorrow, woe or tears percisely as it is—

That give the poet's touch t' things that's commonplace an' poor,

An' fill your eyes with tears an' smiles an' make y' long for more—

The Fambly

The lines that picture homeliness so honest an' so true—

That Sis 'll cry,
An' mother crys,
An' pa, he sniffles too!

“An' just t' think,” pa tells us then, “the man that wrote them rhymes,
That 's cheered the hearts of saddened folks a hundred thousand times,
Is layin' sick an' now he needs the very thing that he Has allus peddled, free-for-all, t' folks like you an' me!”

He shets the book an' thinks a while, then father bows his head,

The fambly gethers closer whilst the evenin' prayers are said:

“God bless us all an' strengthen us, but more especially, Jim,

Do all You kin for needy folks, but do the most for *him*—

Persarve his hand t' pen the things that 's simple sweet an' true.”

An' Sis 'll cry,
An' mother cries,
An' pa, he sniffles too!

A STRANGER RETURNED.

WHY Mother-O'-Mine, and don't you know
The summer days of the Long Ago?—
The soft south-wind and the sweet perfume
Of the smiling fields and the orchard bloom?—
When the orioles "swung-high-swung-low"
In the maple trees, in the Long Ago?

Why, you remember that little boy!—
He used to come with a broken toy
Or little hurt, and you used to play
At kissing the tears and the hurt away,
And caught him up, in your mother joy,
And sang to him of the gypsy boy.

You must recall! Why he used to stand
By your chair arm here in the old dream land,
Or nestle close, and he 'd promise true
To never go from the side of you;
Why, once you cried on his shoulder and
He never, never could understand?

He went with you to the chest that day
You put his top and his ball away,
And wound his spool with the pretty string
And locked it safe like a treasured thing;
He marveled much at the saddened way
You held him close in your arms that day.

A Stranger Returned

The boy of old has returned to you!
The soft south-wind and the blossoms, too,
The orioles and the flowered ways,
And these are the same old happy days—
He 's kept his love and his promise true,
And all these years he has walked with you.

LAUGHTER ABROAD.

LAUGHTER lives a roving life,
Shunning ways of tears and strife—
Turning from the paths that be
Dark and dank and shadowy,
Into ways where, at his will,
Sunlight grows more golden still;
Watch him as he comes—in style
Like a vagrant—whilst his smile
Leaves its echo rippling after—
That 's Laughter!

Watch him in the crowded square,
Scanning all the faces there—
Brushing from this face a tear,
Banishing a wrinkle here—
Practising his wizardry
'Til the dullest eye can see
Nearly all the mouths in town
Fashion up instead of down!
Ah, he is a cunning crafter,
Is Laughter!

Watch him as he goes his way!
Having set the world at play—
Sparing cheer and smiles on none,
Laughter has dethroned his own!

Laughter Abroad

None is left who jests and chaffs
Laughter until Laughter laughs;
Though he pleased a world till it
Held its sides at Laughter's wit,
There is none so mirthless after,
As Laughter!

WHEN THE SHUTTERS ARE DRAWN.

THE shutters is drawn at the Samuelses' place,
An' people that passes it by,
Jist ponder an' think, with a sorrowful face,
An' smother a tear in their eye;
The naybors come in with their offerin's of love,
An' tidy the livin' rooms, too,
Or set in the kitchen a-whisperin' of
"Now what 'll the little ones do?"

The hired man putters a-doing the chores,
Whilst tears keep him nearly unmanned,
He fixes the winders an' tinkers the doors,
For Wednesday draws closer to hand;
He thinks of her goodness, her motherly ways,
The sickness she guided him through,
Of all that she missed in her life, an' he says:
"Now what 'll the little ones do?"

The naybors come in in their nayborly way—
The naybors who knew her in life,
Who know how she struggled an' slaved night an'
day
To live to the name of a wife;
They know all the heft of the burden she bore
An' how little of pleasure she knew,
An' tearfully ask, as they 're closin' the door:
"Now what 'll the little ones do?"

16 **When the Shutters are Drawn**

An' up in the room where the shutters is drawn,
 With his tears rainin' bitter an' hot,
The visions of chances that 's wasted an' gone
 Come back to the man who forgot;
The dreams of green fields an' of pleasures that 's
 past—

 The joys that he owed to her, too!
For there sets the man who neglected to ast:
 "Then what would the little ones do?"

A MORAL ISSUE.

THE idee was Mirandy's; she allowed we 'd orter
go

An' pack our duds an' go t' town t' see the chicken
show;

An' so we went an tuk it in, but bein' that we 're
jest

Ol' fashioned folks who still believe ol' fashioned ways
are best,

I s'pose that we was prejudiced an' mebbe sot ag'in
New-fangled ways that smarter folks see lots o' virtue
in—

Perhaps that 's it—but, anyway, we both rise up t'
state

There 's been too much shinnanigin on Nature's plans
of late!

We wandered 'mongst the fancy coops of chickens—
there was some

So proud an' highfalutin' that we dassen't speak to
'em,

Whilst others looked so foreign-like an' had such
foreign gaits

'Twas plain they could n't understand nor talk
United States,

There 's Andalusians, Cochins, too, an' them Rhode
Island Reds,

An' other kinds wore pantalets an' shawls around
their heads,
An' other freaks, 'til mother says, "I swan, I 'd like
t' see
A plain ol' fashioned chicken, 'cause I 'm homesick,"
she-says-she.

But nary a good ol' fashioned hen or rooster could be
found—
Jest ultra-hens with pedygrees, that strutted all
around
With heads helt up an' cacklin' 'til they purty nigh
was hoarse,
Like women, home from Reno, with a new fresh-laid
divorce!
There wa'n't no old familiar sight of mother hen an'
brood—
There wa'n't a sign of henyard life nor chicken mother-
hood;
Mirandy up an' told the man—the boss of all the
pens—
That we was "strangers in the place; where was the
settin' hens?"

I thought I saw the feller smile, but he-says-he "Come
on,"
An' led us 'round amongst the coops an' pens until
blame-don
He found a durned contraption—we could hear the
chickens "tweet"
An' lots of folks was standin' 'round discussing
Farenheat;

I thought the feller smiled ag'in an' about the time he
did

He reached across the railin' there an' lifted up the
lid!—

An' drat my pelt if ever I expected such a sight—

They 's hatchin' chickens right an' left by durned
electric light!

Mirandy sort o' squared herself, her motherhood up-
set;

“My law!” says she “have all the hens on airth turned
Suffragette?—

An' ain't there no more motherin' like Nature meant
for?—Come

Away from this immoral place—the place for us is
home!”

.

An' home we went, where Virtue rules an' never
gees nor haws—

Where all the chickens on the place know all their
pas and mas—

Where moral law is uppermost, an' mother she in-
ten's

A special prize of extry corn for all her settin' hens.

LIKE MAIRY DOES.

I WONDER if all wimin do
Like Mairy does, an' jaw an' jaw
The youngun's all the hull day through
An' half the night untwell, my law,
The childurn do same thing ag'in,
An' git idee, like childurn will,
The only times she's punishin'
In earnest 's when she 's *keepin' still!*

She scolds 'em all for this an' that,
For trompin' down the flower plot,
For goin' out without a hat
Or *wearin'* one, as like as not!—
For climbin' trees or tryin' t' fight,
Or chasin' chickens 'round about—
She fidgets when they 're *in* her sight
An' twict as nervous when they 're *out*.

She can't abide a quiet child
No more 'n me, an' yit she will
Jist comb 'em down for runnin' wild
As often as for keepin' still;
I 've seen her scold an' tan their pelts
For simplest didoes ever told—
An' then when there ain't nothin' else
She 'll scold *because she has t' scold!*

An' yit, when they 're asleep in bed
An' Mairy goes an' holds a hand,
Or kisses 'em or strokes a head,
I 've wished that they could understand;
I 've wished that they could feel her lay
Against their cheeks, all jam an' smutch,
An' feel her tears an' hear her say:
"I sometimes think I scold too much!"

BONESET TEA.

SINCE Fortune smiled upon me in her pleasin'
sort o' way

An' I have been a-livin' like a millionaire *au fait*—
Parlezvoo Français?—

I 've done a heap of thinkin' an' I think that first an'
last

I 'm thinkin' less of nowadays than of the days that 's
passed!

I shut my eyes to mammon an' its likes, an' jist
recall

The country institutions, the familiar spots an' all;
An' 'long the last of Aprile, or in May, it seems t' me
I allus think of mother an'

Her

Boneset

Tea.

In riches there is sumthin' gives your taste newfangled
kinks

An' sets a feller longin' for more soothin' kinds o'
drinks—

Nerves, some doctors thinks;

There 's fizzes an' there 's rickeys an' there 's Frenchy-
fied frappés,

All cinnamoned an' nutmegged in a dozen different
ways,

An' cordials that they serve y' on a sort o' thimble
plan

That would n't make a swaller for a Local Option
man!

They 're pizen, but I drink 'em by this simple recipe:
Jist close your eyes an' down 'em—

Think of

Boneset

Tea!

Our youthful minds was certain that our systems
needed it—

It cured us of *somethin'* but I ain't discovered yit

What it aimed t' hit;

It might o' been for janders or for fever, like enuff,
That good old-fashioned mothers allus give the bitter
stuff!

Whatever 't was it fixed us, for there wa'n't a youngun
known

But lied himself plum healthy till the boneset tea was
gone!

The finest old p'ventive in the world it seemed t' me
Wa'n't patent pills, but *mothers* an'

Their

Boneset

Tea!

But things are sort o' diffurnt now, the years are
takin' flight,

With money, gout an' whatnot I have changed an
awful sight—

Hair's a-gittin white!

Boneset Tea

I ain't fergot the boneset, though, an' law! the very
thought

Will set me makin' faces at the closest friend I got,
Then sort o' set me thinkin' of the debt I owe to you—
Of all the love an' kindness an' the things you used
t' do,

An' makes me hope you 'll read between these few
poor lines from me

An' know I 'm thinkin' of you an'

Your

Boneset

Teal

A FELLER'S HAND AND SMILE.

THERE 'S lots of things in this world of our'n to
 fault an' to make complaint,
An' more you figger an' wonder *why* the things ain't
 what they *ain't*,
The more you 'll see that for every woe there 's a
 blessin' for every man,
An' then give in that the Lord was right when He
 figgered this mortul plan;
There 's roomatism an' janders, too, an' a slather of
 ills an' aches,
That 's more'n offset, as the sayin' is, by syrup an'
 buckwheat cakes!
But best of all the blessin' 's here, an' evenin' things a
 pile,
Is the good warm clasp of a feller's hand an' the wealth
 of a feller's smile.

When far from home an' your kith an' kin, an' y'
 feel that y' want t' go
Back home ag'in an' your heart drops down t' 'leven
 or twelve *below*—
When nuthin y' see kin please y' much, an' y' feel
 that you'd trade it ail
T' be back home on the farm ag'in, a-doin' nuthin'
 a'tall—

A Feller's Hand and Smile

When music—whether it 's good or *not*—will grate on
yer tarnal ear
Like sawmill rippin' a hick'ry log, an' y' feel that
you'd ruther hear
A crow a-singin', O then's the time it 'll bolster y'
up a pile—
The good warm clasp of a feller's hand an' the wealth
of a feller's smile.

There's some that's rich an' there's some that's pore,
an' there's some that's jist betwixt,
An' here ain't neither the time ner place t' speak of
the toler'bly fixed;
It's them that's pore that I 'm thinkin' of, the
quieter ones that jest
Go on an' on in their ploddin' way a-doin' their level
best
An' stayin' pore, an' a-thankin' God fer all that He
up an' sends—
For rain an' crops an' fer things t' eat, for fambly,
health an' friends—
The men who thrive on their simple ways, an' cherish
in hullsome style
The good warm clasp of a feller's hand an' the wealth
of a feller's smile.

WHEN LIDY DIED.

“ I DON'T care what the weather does as long as it
does n't rain,”

Lidy 'd say as she lingered through that summer of
fear an' pain,

An' sot her eye

On the smilin' sky

T' watch the cloud-fleece kitterin' by,

Or foller the glint of a dancin' beam

That come t' brighten her fevered dream;

Brighter the sun come shinin' down the faster she
'peared t' wane,

Yit did n't care what the weather done as long as it
did n't rain

“I don't care what the weather does as long as it
does n't rain,”

Whispered that to her mother an' me, O time an' time
again!

A patch of blue

Where the sun came through,

Or ennything else appertainin' to

A perfect day, done more by fur

Than medicine ever could done for her!

Soon as ever 'twas light she 'd turn an' look through
the winder pane—

“I don't care what the weather does as long as it
does n't rain.”

When Lidy Died

She did n't care what the weather done as long as it
did n't rain!

'Count o' that we could bear the thought she could n't
come back again

The day she died!

She could n't abide

The tears in here an' the rain outside;

'T was sort of a day that the folks who knew her

Agreed with us that she could n't endure—

Rain come down from a heavy sky an' beat like a
restless tide

'Gainst the winder of Lidy's room, the day that our
Lidy died!

Fall and winter has passed away an' summer is
drawin' nigh—

O, but it's lonesome around the place, with no one
but ma and I

A-settin' here

In our easy cheer,

Suspectin' each other of hidin' a tear,

An' thinkin' both, of that dreary day

The rain beat down in that restless way!

Down in our hearts where our sorrow is we feel, as
the hours wane,

We don't care what the weather does as long as it
does n't rain!

OL' JOHN RAUB OF DALLAS VALLEY.

OL' John Raub of Dallas Valley—your ol' naybors
ain't fergot
The cheer that you was famed for, an' they 're
thinkin', like as not,
On this blustry winter's evenin', same as I am, how
you used
To spread your kindness 'mongst us when we used
t' come to roost;
I can see you yet, ol' naybor, an' the twinkle in your
eyes,
The gladness of your greetin' an' your genywine
surprise
As we crowded 'cross your thresholt, an' you says:
“Well, I 'll be beat!
I wish I 'd knowed you 's comin'—we 'd had sumthin'
good t' eat!”

Whilst the tunin' fork of Memory is ringin' in my
ears
It seems t' vibrate music of the nigh fergotten years—
I can hear the sleighbells jingle whilst the load of
Youth's delight
Is headin' out fer Raubses through the frosty winter's
night;

30 Ol' John Raub of Dallas Valley

I can see the shadders flittin' of your portly wife an'
you

Behind the linsey curtains, an' I hear your "howdy-
do!"

As the door swings open to us, an' I hear your "I 'll
be beat!"

I wish I 'd knowed you 's comin'—we 'd had sumthin'
good t' eat!"

So you wish you 'd knowed we's comin? If I did n't
know y' John,

I reckon I 'd be thinkin' your surprise was all put on,
For 't was sumthin' kin to magic or a slight-o'-
handed show

How tables full o' eatables an' good things seemed t'
grow!—

There was turkeys, ducks an' chickens, too, all
garnisheed with sass

An' jist as many helpin's as a fellow chose t' pass,
Which the same belied your welcome and your greetin'
"I 'll be beat!"

I wish I 'd knowed you 's comin'—we 'd had sumthin'
good t' eat!"

Ol' John Raub of Dallas Valley—O you bet we ain't
forgot!

We knowed y' even better than yourself—as like as
not,

An' remember better, prob'ly, 'cause y' see we 've
moved away

Where folks like you are scarcer than a "pee-wee"
Christmas day!—

Ol' John Raub of Dallas Valley 31

An' a-lookin' all around us at the avarice an' greed,
An' folks a-slightin' others who are like enuff in need,
It 's a pleasure jist a-thinkin' of your hullsome "I 'll
be beat!

I wish I 'd knowed you 's comin'—we 'd had sumthin'
good t' eat!"

BACK THROUGH OLD PATHWAYS.

YESTERDAY whilst wand'rin' back
What I call the old "back-track"—
That is, through the fields an' trees
That 's been blessed memories
All these years, I swan, a wee
Little feller waylaid me—
Little chap, with hat-brim down
Over his two eyes o' brown,
Robber-style, an' seemed t' say:
"Both hands up!" jist thataway!
Backed me 'gainst the pasture fence
An' robbed me of my common-sense!

Took my hand, he did, an' led
Where the pathways chanced to head,
This way, that, an' over yon
Where my happiest days have gone;
Down the ol' creek banks an' through
Pools that mirror back at you
Smiles an' faces you 've forgot
Twenty years, an' never thought
Nothin' of, yet, here they be,
Fresh as when they stole from me
Injun-file, so soft an' low
I did n't scarcely sense 'em go.



"Backed me 'gainst the pasture fence
An' robbed me of my common-sense."

Ranged we did, acrost the old
Green Chautauqua hills, that hold
More real love an' sweet surprise
Than the slopes o' Paradise!
Whittled alder limbs an' punched
Pith out of—yes, an' munched
Sorrel-tops an' split the still
Hillside silence with the shrill
Grass blade, like we did long back
'Fore we sort o' lost the knack!
Jist cut up, like old fool gents
That 's been robbed o' common-sense!

Then, at sundown, home we come
Steppin' to the partridge drum
On the ol' log, where I 've hid
Long before that partridge did!
Steppin' light an' high, an' the
Youngun purt' nigh glad as me,
Seemed as if, with floppin' brim
Over the faraway eyes of him;
'Crost the brook an' fields, an' then
In the shades an' home again,
Stoppin' at the pasture fence
T' give me back my common-sense!

BOB WHITE & CO.

SETTIN' on the fence to-day there 's somethin'
seemed t' strike

On my ears so happily an' so farmiliar-like,
That I turned an' looked around expectin' I would see
Some ol' friend a-waitin' there t' say "Hullo" t'
me!

An' there *was* an ol' friend there—a friend I rise t'
say

As staunch an' true as any friend as ever graced my
sight,

Teetered on the fence rail there, in a bran' new cut-
away,

Chirrupin' his vis'tin' card "Ol'-Bob-White."

Cocked his head this way an' that an' sort o' says,
"Hullo

What on earth is ailin' you, I 'd be obleeged t' know?
What are *you* so solemn for? I 'll warrant you ain't
got

Half the trouble in your craw that I have, like as
not!"

That 's the way he rattled on, an' every note he blowed
Struck me where my troubles was an' knocked 'em
left an' right

Like the dolls on circus day, an' 'fore I really knowed
Dogged if I wa'n't chirrupin' "Ol'-Bob-White."

Shamed me with his happy way an' friendly sort o'
sign,

'Til I says: "If *you* 'd as lief, then you 're a friend o'
mine!

You 're the kind o' friend I need, a friend t' make me
smile

When the world seems turned around an' scarcely
worth the while."

Swelled his throat an' stretched his wings with evident
delight,

Chirruped twice as loud an' long, an' sweeter than he
had!

Then an' there us two agreed, myseif an' ol' Bob
White—

We 've gone into partnership jist a-bein' glad!

SPEAKIN' TO AN OLD SWEETHEART.

IF I could write like poets write—
Like Field er Whitcomb Riley might,
I would n't waste a jot of time
A-writin' high-falutin' rhyme!
I 'd sling the sort o' verse that thrills
About the ol' Chautauquay hills—
Of drowsy days, an' evenin's too,
An' bein' home again with you.

I 'd rhyme a sleepy day in June—
Perhaps a Sunday afternoon,
With peace an' sunshine reachin' out
T' hit the tarnal blues a clout;
The smell of apple bloom an' peach,
An' bees that stuttered in their speech
From swiggin' honey—mebbe more
Than what the gluttons bargained for!

I 'd rhyme a road among the hills—
A ploddin' horse betwixt the thills
Of some ol' dadburned jennylin,
That had a girl an' feller in—
An' rhyme it plain enuff t' see
The girl was *you* an' feller *me*
Before our courtin' days was through,
An' I was there t' home with you.

I 'd choose the very finest thing
A man was ever knowed t' sing
Of enny county *ennywhere*
In all the world, an' I declare
I 'd 'zaggerate a thousand times,
An' build the durndest set o' rhymes
You ever saw—the kind that spills
Our love fer them Chautauquay hills!

An' then I 'd write a rhyme t' fit
The lonesome spells a feller 'll git
Whose trade is princip'ly t' roam
An' allus be away from home—
Of how his heartstrings sort o' *kink*
Whenever he sets down t' think
Of fields of green an' skies of blue,
An' bein' home again with you!

A FARM CHILD'S FANCY.

O DOWN in the barn there 's the funniest horse!—
With wobbly legs an' a little soft nose,
An' little short tail an' the funniest voice—
That come in the night—an' *how*, do y' s'pose?

Well, little fat feller rode over the hill
When we-uns all was asleep in the night,
An' put out his horse an' reckined he "will
Ist play around here 'twell it starts t' git light."

He 's strange little feller an' laffed all the time,
An' had a red nose an' was pudgy an' fat
Like uncles an' circus clowns is, an' instead
O' hair he had *icicles* under his hat!

So he put out his horse an' he laffs an' sez he
"I reckon I 'll git me a brush an' some paint
An' fix up this place 'twell the folks livin' here
Will wake in the mornin' an' think that they
ain't!"

He climbed up the trees t' the topper-most leaves
An' painted 'em purple an' silver an' brown,
An' them 'at he could n't make purty why he
Ist shook an' shook 'twell he rattled 'em down!

He painted the trees an' he painted the gates,
An' painted the roof an' the fence an' the stile,
An' everything *else* in the kentry, I gess,
In *ever*' direction, fer much as a mile!

He worked so hard he must o' fergot,
An' 'fore he knowed it the sun up an' shined!
An' law! but he scurried away an' *he left*
His pore little wobbly critter behind!

OL' WAR WIDDERS.

NOW Decoration 's come an' gone—
The ol' war tunes is still,
An' flowers all is wiltin' on
The graves on Soldiers' Hill;
Ol' uniforms is put away—
Our feelin's out of kink—
An' now it's time, I want t' say,
T' jist lay back an' think.

We 've honored them on Soldier's Hill,
That wore ol' faded blue
At Fredericksburg an' Chanc'lorsville—
An' they deserve it, too:
But ain't we plum neglected sum
Who clung t' Glory's hem?—
The wimin folks that staid t' hum—
Who 's goin' t' honor them?

Who 's goin' t' place the bloom above
The frail forms restin' there,
Who bore in fortytude an' love
Full twict a soldier's share?
Whose part was only jist t' wait
'Til smoke had cleared away—
T' stand within the open gate
An' watch an' wait—an' pray!

I 'low the buds grow every bit
For wimin folks like them,
As what they do for men who fit
An' guarded Glory's hem!
It 's time fer us t' understand—
T' honor grey an' blue,
An' everyone who took a hand—
An' ol' war widders, too !

THE WAY OUR CHILDHOOD WENT.

THIS-A-WAY an' that-a-way, an' in an out an'
through,
Through the gate of mornin' an' a lane of dancin'
dew,
Through a day of sunshine an' a day of weepin' rain,
Through a day of pleasure an' another day of pain—
O'er the fields of Summer, through the valley of Con-
tent,
'Cross the fields of Wonder was the way our childhood
went.

Don't you mind the faces of the tired little men
Trampin' on beside us through the orchard-lands of
Then?
Don't you mind the maidens with their lips of cherry
red
Puckered sweet as blossoms that was bloomin' over-
head?—
Mind how Nature's music an' the childrun's voices
blent
Whilst we went a singin' down the way our childhood
went?

Now the world is changin' an' it seems to me today
All its golden splendor is a-fadin' plum away!—

The Way Our Childhood Went 43

An' there 's less of music in this grey old world of
His—

What there is is "out of tune" as ol'-time sayin' is:
Yet we keep on livin' an' contrive to be content,
Happy—jist a-dreamin' of the way our childhood
went.

FIDDLIN' TROUBLE AWAY.

BILL HUMINGER tells of a feller named Prime
'At lived at the Corners, or Bellinger's Springs
As folks calls it now, who spent all his time
Inventin' a fiddle with twenty-six strings!
The feller, Bill cakalates, figgered that four
Wa'n't near enuff strings by a twenty or more,
An' so he kep' whittlin' an' workin' away
Until it was finished an' ready one day,
An' Bill say that "law
When he 'd fiddle an' draw,
'T was about the best fidd'lin' that ever I saw!"

But whilst he 'd been workin' an' foolin' his time
O' course he 'd neglected his farmin' an' sich—
His fences an' fodder was wuthless, but Prime
Was feller 'at never would want t' be rich
So he did n't care, but he 'd whittle an' sing
An' look fer some place fer t' fasten a string;
Yit Huminger says 'at there 's sumthin' would strike
A stranger about him, y' could n't but like—
"His smiles an' his ways"
Bill Huminger says
"An' way he could fiddle would lengthened your
days!"

But consyquence was 'at the dealers in town

Got kind o' pervoked with the feller, ontwell

The garnishee man an' the sheriff went down

T' close on some notes 'at he 'd owed fer a spell;

They found him a-sawin' an' fiddlin' at

A sort of a campmeetin' fav-er-ite that

Got into their heels an' they danced, 'twell they 's
numb,

An' durned if they did n't fergit why they come!—

“So stories ran”

Says Huminger, an'

Says sheriff danced off with the garnishee man !

WHEN THE GUIDO CHORUS SINGS.

I 'VE heard the wind sigh softly 'til you 'd almost
think it grieves,
I 've heard the patterin' music of the fallin' locust
leaves,
I 've sensed the song of Springtime that the apple
blooms impart,
I 've felt the hymn of gladness from a feller's happy
heart,
I 've listened in the maples to the robins' silver
chords,
An' heard the worter ripple over stony country fords;
But every sort of music that my recollection brings
Is only jist a patch on
What the Guido Chorus sings!

I 've heard the roar of thunder foller Summer's sweet-
est strain,
An' heard the thunder give away t' Summer's song
again—
An, though I 'm shy on "tempos" an' the "phrasin'"
an' the "space,"
'T was like the Guido fellers when the tenors chase the
bass!

It seems t' me the angels drop the fiddle an' the harp
For fear o' making discords by a-goin' flat or sharp—
They shut their noise, I reckon, an' they sort o' fold
 their wings,
An' listen to their betters
 When the Guido Chorus sings!

Now I ain't much on music; why, I don't suppose I
 kin
Distinguish "obligatters" from the box a fiddle's in,
But when they crash like thunder—then as soft as
 drippin' dew—
I swanny now, that 's music, an' you bet I know it,
 too!
An' when I die I reckon you kin let the angels go,
I 'd ruther have my singin' done by fellers that I
 know—
Jist let 'em lay around a spell an' rest their voice an'
 wings,
An' let me fly Off Yender
 While the Guido Chorus sings!

PARTIALITY.

PA is good to all of us and buys the mostest things—
Suckers, gum an' lots of toys that I can't think
to tell,

Injyrubber dolly too, an' really bird that sings,
But he shows partiality an' buys the most for Nell,
An' that 's because
One time her was
Awful sick with fever an' her 's ist a-gittin' well.

Once he buyed a doll for me an' Jim a "Jungle Book,"
Sammy got a rockin' horse an' baby got a bell—
Ist one thing for each of us—an' then pa went and
took
An' he buyed a doll an' book an' bell an' horse for
Nell!—

An' pa said "Shoo!
I 'm s'prised at you,
Jealous of your sister, an' her ist a-gittin' well!"

Guess he thinks he must, because one day he said he
will,
Once when her was awful sick an' had her worstest
spell,

An' our window blinds was shut an' ever'one was
still,

'Nen I peeked an' saw my pa an' heerd him cry an'
tell

“It could n't be!—

No sir-r-e-

He 'd give ennything if her was ist a-gittin' well!”

CHRISTMAS TIMES PASSED AND GONE.

CHRISTMAS in the Long Ago! Ho, my lazy-dazy

Don't the recollections of it fairly drive y' crazy?

Everyone distracted an' their blood a-runnin' high,
Brimmin' with the feelin' of a Christmas drawin'
nigh!

Greasin' up your Sunday boots an' oilin' of your
hair,

Toggin' in your Sunday clothes with more than
common care,

Fixin up for Mosher's dance that happened once a
year,

Bringin' in the Christmas time on tidal waves o'
cheer!

Crispy nights an' frosty ones, a cutter painted yellow,
Fashioned plenty small enuff for a gal an' fellow—

Trustin' to the fambly hawss that seemed t' under-
stand

Journeys through the winter nights an' drivin'
singlehand;

Gal an' fellow spoonin' like as not, an' blamy-
don,

Nothin' but the blinkin' stars an' moon a-lookin'
on—

Nothin' but the stars an' moon t' hear 'em promisin'
T' see the Baptist preacher 'fore it 's Christmas time
ag'in!

Fun an' frolic runnin' loose! A ban on melancholy!—
Law, we did n't used t' have no mistletoe or holly,
That 's a new ideer an' of doubtful tendencies—
Then a fellow stole the kiss that rightfully was his,
Stole the gal, as like as not, an' then went toe-an'-
heel

Dancin' down the center in an' ol' Furginny reel,
Gallivantin' back ag'in an' then reverse, an' law,
Never gettin' tired whilst the fiddler would saw!

Dance an extry set or two by the light of mornin',
Settin' out for home again jist as day was bornin'—
Figger any way y' want, I guess you allus found
Quickest way t' git her home was longest way around!

.
Can't y' train your hearin' just t' listen through the
years

Till the sound o' sleighbells kind o' jingles in your
ears?

Can't y' see the faces of the folks y' used t' know,
Christmas friends an' sweethearts of the Long Time
Ago?

A GOOD SORT O' MAN T' KNOW.

I RECKIN of all of the folks that I 've knowed
From Beersheba right down t' Dan,
The one that I allus have cottoned the most
Was the commonest sort of a man—
The commonest sort with a hand hard as horn,
And a heart in his vest that would swell
With thankfulness when you would ask how he was:
"I thanky, I 'm tol'able well."

You 'll find him, I reckon, wherever y' go,
Wherever y' happen t' stray—
Wherever there 's room for the blossoms t' blow
An' space for his feelin's t' play;
An' allus, no odds what the weather may be,
He has the same story t' tell—
The same hullsome grasp of your hand when he says
"I thanky, I 'm tol'able well."

There 's times when I 've knowed that his asthmy
was worse,
An' roomatiz bothered him, too—
When trouble was taggin' unreason'bly clost
An' mebbe his interest was due;
But law, when you 'd ask him how things got along,
There was nothin' t' hint it or tell
That things was n't right, in the grasp of his hand
An' his "Thanky, I 'm tol'able well."

In the cheer of his words an' the warmth of his hand
There 's sumthin' that allus was meant—
A sermon, I thought—a sermon that preached
The gospel of pure content;
No blues was so blue nor sorrows so deep
But somehow he seemed to dispel,
An' here 's my respects an' my love to the men
Who allus are "tol'able well."

AN OLD FRIEND.

[F I could sling our language like what some fellers
kin

An' sort o' leave my grammer out an' crowd my
feelin's in,

I 've allus thought I 'd like to take a reef an' let 'er
go

An' try t' pay y', Andy Bort, the debt I really owe;
I would n't want my rhyme t' halt or words t' "inter-
fere"—

I 'd want 'em both t' flow as free as your old-fashioned
cheer

You used t' spend so 'stravagant, an' more y' seemed
t' spend

The more of it y' seemed t' have t' give away an'
lend!

I 've allus argyed that a man as easy-goin' 's you
Was put on this terrestchul ball with speshul work t'
do,

The which was, by example, to proclaim it near an'
far

That "half the joy in livin' is t' take' things as they
are";

An' you 're the livin' proof of it! Why your six foot
an' four

Casts jes' as long a shadow as it ever did—an' more!

Your cheer is jes' as hullsomalike an', if y' care t'
know,

Y' haint one minute older than y' was ten years ago!

Y' allus seemed t' have the knack o' findin' what there
is

A-lurkin' in the corners of this hullsome world of
His—

The little things that other folks don't understand
or see

You used t' know their hidin' place an' point 'em
out t' me;

I swan, it allus seemed t' me you somehow understood
The secrets of the medderland, the vallies an' the
wood—

Why, springtime fairly used t' say, as it come buddin'
in,

"If Andy Bort is ready then I guess I 'd best begin!"

At risk of tellin' secrets, I remember where you kep'
The vintage that was mighty apt t' git us out o'
step—

The vintage that would spur you on till you declaimed
again

That pome on "Deacon Watkin's Hawss" an'
"Sock'ry's Settin' Hen,"

The two that you was partial to an' give us, as a rule,
At Chestnut Grove Ly-cee-um or the Dewey Districk
School—

I swan, we near got pleurisy an' room-a-tism too,
A-laffin' so when you 'd recite like what you used t'
do!

You wa'n 't too good in wordly ways, jes' good enuff
fer me—

As good as what a human man had ever ought t' be—

But if I had the knack t' write like what some fellers
do,

I 'd tell 'em what a lot they 've missed by never
knowin' you;

I 'd tell 'em what a lot they 've passed on this terrest-
chul sphere

By knowin' not the depth an' warmth of your old-
fashioned cheer—

By never havin' gone away an' then come back, y'
know,

An' had you grasp their hand an' say, "Hullo, my
boy, hullo!"

GRAN'PAP'S DIVERSION.

FOR real content an' happiness
An' peace that 's genywine, I jes'
Commend ol' gran'pap settin' there
In ol' splint-bottom easy chair
Afore the fire, jes' about
The time November 's creepin' out,
An' actin' like November kin
A-freezin' everybody *in!*

I swan, if I could paint, I 'd take
Some silver grey an' red an' make
A picture of him settin' there,
The glow upon his face and hair,
An' Myry's childurn listenin'
T' tales o' things he figgered in!
I 'd label it "Contentment," too,
For, gran'pa, real contentment 's *you!*

It allus seems t' weave a spell
That 's magical an' kind o'—well
It 's sort o' diffurnt-like, you know,
An' minds a man of Long Ago;
The fire from the open grate
Throws out his shadder long an' straight,
An' looks t' me—*an' allus does—*
Like gran'pap when the army was.

Gran'pap's Diversion

In ashes gran'pap trails his cane
T' first Bull Run an' back again,
An' then t' Richmond—back an' through—
An' Spottsyl-van-y Courthouse, too,
Where he fit at, an' Malvern Hill,
An' there he stops, his voice grows still,
An' wipes his brimmin' tears aside,
For *there* 's where gran'pap's comrade died.

An' then, as fierce as ever, he
Trails through the ashes after Lee
Like once he really *had* t' do,
An' ketches Lee, an' whoops him, too,
At Gettysburg, an' breaks his line!
Then like enuff the clock strikes nine,
An' Myry whispers: "Pa, I 'low
Its bedtime—*war* 's *all over now*."

A DAY WITH THE YOUNGSTERS.

LITTLE SIX and Half-past Three
Take my hands and come with me
Down along the pasture way
Where your daddy used t' play.

Here 's a whistle whittled out
Of a weepin' willow sprout—
Hold it *so* an' press yer thumb,
Blow an' watch the fairies come.

Here 's some dandylions! Blow
Hard like this an' then you 'll know
If yer mother 's wantin' you—
Cross my heart and honest true!

See that wren a-fussin' round
On the fence an' on the ground
Like she did n't want us here?
Guess she 's got sum babies near.

Cowpath turns right here, now git
Down like this an' mooch a bit
So 's 't the folks can't see us, then
Mebbe call us home again.

A Day with the Youngsters

That 's enuff my beauties bright!
Now, we 're out of mother's sight—
Dirty, loose and wild an' free
Jist like daddy used to be!

Here 's the crick, the singin' stream
Where your daddy used t' dream
Take this bent pinhook an' fish—
Let yer daddy lie an' wish!

Now my chums we 'll take a swim—
Hang yer clothes from yender limb;
Careful now, my buddies—*there*
Now you 've gone an' wet yer hair!

Now you 'll ketch it, yes sir-e-e-e
Somehow mothers allus see!
Try t' dry it hard 's you kin,
Mothers knows where boys have been!

See the shadders stretchin' out
'Mindin' us t' put about—
Say it 's time the chores was done—
Cracky, but we 've had some fun!

Home again, along the way
Where your daddy used t' play—
See your mother's feigned surprise!
See the tears in gramma's eyes!

THE FIRST LOVE.

MIND when I 'se a little chap
Jist about a chair-arm high,
Used t' climb in mother's lap
Every evenin', mighty nigh;
Allus called me her "best beau"
Mother did, an' laughed, an' dad
Used t' frown, an' fluster so
P'tendin'-like he's awful mad!

Used t' like t' stroke her head
Like a youngun allus does—
"Lovin' her," I allus said—
"Puppy love" she said it was;
Jist the same there 's many a tear
Quivered on her lids when she
Heerd me whisper in her ear
"She 's the sweetest girl for me."

Sweetest girl of all! I swan,
Mebbe now it 's out o' place
One of my years takin' on
Showin' sich a childish trace—
Clingin' to her mem'ry yet—
Longin' for her love again—
Mebbe better jist forget
Things I said to mother then.

The First Love

But I can't! There 's times that I
 Feel I 'm jist a wanderer
Lookin' low an' lookin' high
 Jist with hopes o' findin' her;
Want to hear her voice an' then
 Plead with her t' not forget—
Tell her I 'm a boy again,
 An' the same opinion yet!

THE VANISHING TROOPS.

(To the 100th Regiment, New York Volunteers, on
the occasion of their 50th anniversary.)

REVEILLE!

• FROM out the deep, grey mists of other days
You come again, your tattered flags upraise;
No roll of drums, no scream of martial fife,
No glint of arms, no hint of hate or strife,
No hissing shell, no boom of hostile gun,
But only peace, the peace your victory won.

FALL IN!

Form slowly now, and not as once you did
When war's alarms beset you and forbid
The lagging step! But let the drum beat slow,
With less of vim than in the Long Ago;
For sturdy limbs, that bore you through the fray,
Are tremulous with weight of years today.

EYES FRONT!

Those dimming eyes that saw the battle smokes
Of countless fields—that roved from red Fair Oaks
To war's grim end, and saw the woe and pain,
The sacrifice of suffering and slain
In Freedom's cause! Nor chide the tears that well
As all comes back through Mem'ry's magic spell.

ROLL CALL!

Most sad of all that e'en the brave must die!
So many called and yet so few reply!
So many lost from noble ranks that fought,
So many names of comrades long forgot!
And yet—who knows?—perhaps they hover near
In spirit form and softly answer "Here!"

BREAK RANKS!

You go from us, and vanish one by one,
Your faith kept true and all your service done!
And as you go to take your honored posts
With comrades There of grey and blue-clad hosts,
You take our love and trust that ever will
God's blessing rest upon you! Soldiers still!

GRAN'DAD'S DAY.

(Lincoln's Birthday)

HE ain't done nuthin', more ner less, fer twenty
years er more
But set around the kitchen stove, er in the woodhouse
door
In summertime, a-swattin' flies, an' dreamin' dreams
ag'in
About the march t' Richmond an' the fights he
figured in;
He 's sort o' puttered 'round the place in quiet sort
of way;
"You 'd skeersly know that gran'dad 's here!" is
what we used t' say,
Whilse watchin' him trim creepin' vines er pick sweet
williamses,
But he remembered Lincoln an'—well, yesterday
was his!

He's first one up around the place! Put on that round-
about—
Brass buttons on—'at he wore home when he was
mustered out,
An' forage cap an' catridge box—an' durned 'f he
did n't lay
His army rifle 'cross his knees in keerless sort o' way!

Gran'dad's Day

An' there he sot the hull day long till light got sort
o' dim,

An' law they wa'n't a person here 's important-like
as him!

An' how we laffed but ma-says-ma; "Hesh up, you
simple crowd,

'Cause pa remembers Lincoln *an' no wonder 'at he 's
proud!*"

A MELLOW OLD VOICE.

BEFORE his voice was gone, an' when it come
A Sunday-day, an' all us boys was home,
We 'd gether 'round in sort of fambly ring,
Talk politics or some such foolish thing,
Then *projeck* 'round 'til pa agreed to sing
The good old songs, the army tunes he sung
'Fore we left home an' all us boys was young;
The *good* old songs, an' I suppose they 're *good*
'Cause they 're fergot an' no more understood;
But how they touched his full, deep-chested bass
With melody that fairly filled the place
Then rolled away jist on—an' on—an' on—
O, how he sung before his voice was gone!

My fav-er-ite? Why, if I tried t' call
My fav-er-ite I 'd name 'em one an' all—
Each melody his gentle mem'ry knew—
Especially one, "The Old Red, White an' Blue"
His regmunt sung the time the Grand Review
In Washin'ton; it seems that when he sung
Its sperrit touched his sabre blade that hung
By wartime picture he jist can't abide,
That once *we* laughed at, then growed up—an'
cried!

Then switch from that to some ol' songs, ma says
He used t' sing enduring courtin' days;

She recollects! An' woman-like, blame-don,
Makes pa believe his singin' voice ain't gone!

But nowadays his voice don't seem to me
So *timbered-like* as what it used to be,
Nor round an' full, an' it don't seem to set
A-straddle notes an' pin 'em down, nor get
The high notes out like once it did, and yet
There 's somethin' in its rich an' tremblin' tone
That jist belongs to pa—an' pa alone;
It seems to *jibe*, as oldtime sayin' is,
With his grey hairs an' them ol' songs of his—
There 's somethin' in it, I say, seems to fit
The hallowed past, the charm an' tune of it!
Why, them old songs that he keeps harpin' on,
Sound sweeter now than 'fore his voice was gone!

THANKSGIVING DAY IN THE BOARDING HOUSE.

'T WAS quiet—O so quiet!—in the house the whole
day long!

No vagrant lilt of laughter, not a bit of mirth or song
Was echoed through the hallways, not a hearty call
or shout

To break the dreary silence; not a soul was stirring
out!

The faces at the window pane grew sad and turned
away—

There's something kin to tragedy that mars Thanks-
giving Day!

The Alabaster Lady and the Gent with Russet Shoes,
Admitting they were indisposed, denied they had the
blues;

The Blonde with All the Finger Rings ran lightly
o'er the keys

With "Promise Me" but yielded to the Manicure's
"Please!"

And when the postman went his way and left them
naught but gloom,

They, one by one, slipped out and sought the solace
of their room.

Thanksgiving Day

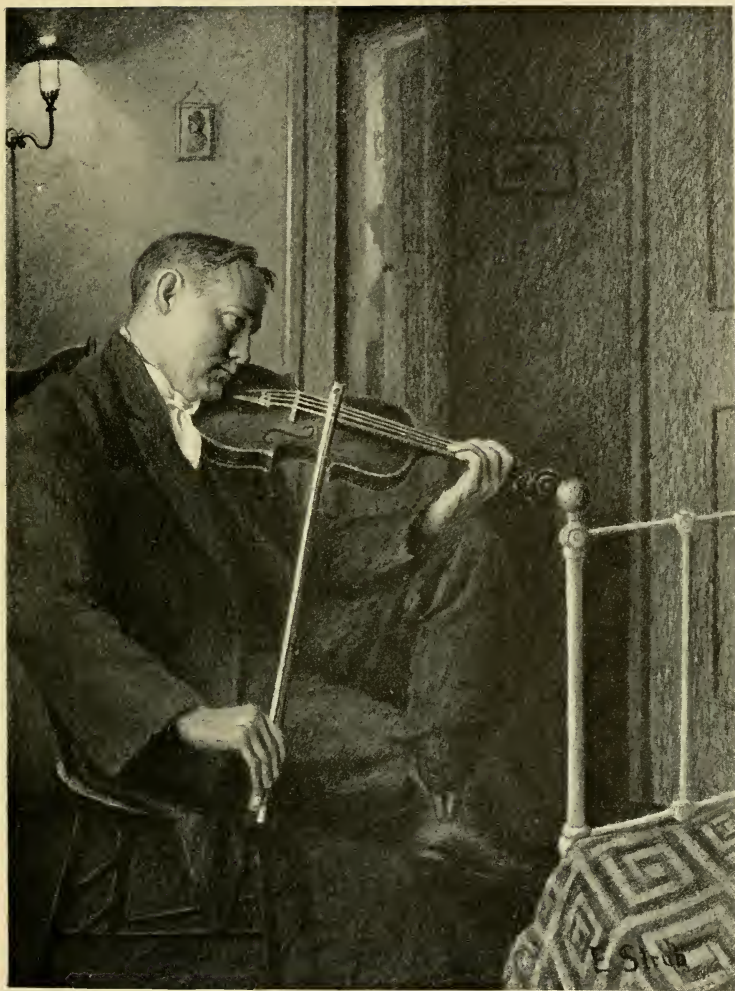
And when, at night, they pondered on the mock'ry
of it all,

The Shabby One who occupied the alcove off the hall,
Threw wide his door and softly played upon his
violin

The sweet refrains that touched the spot their mem-
'ries linger in—

The songs of home and faces gone, that 's writ for
those who roam,

And who shall say they did not spend Thanksgiving
Night at home!



Threw wide his door and softly played upon his violin.

HOMESICKNESS.

SINCE I 've been a-traipsin' roun'
Here an' there, from town to town,
'Spatiatin' on the points,
Patent rights an' extra joints
Dobbsses' Dashless Churn has got—
Lysin' 'bout 'em, like as not—
Sellin' folks "blue sky," as the
Sayin' is, it seems t' me
I 've had more than usual time
To reflect on things, an' I 'm
Plum convinced that home is jest
Better place than all the rest,
An' gits better too, to-wit,
Further off you git from it!

'T'ain't so bad to ease your mind
Thinkin' home ain't far behind—
Hundred miles perhaps, or two,
Ain't upsettin' none to you;
But, you git so far away
Postal cards that 's mailed *today*
Won't git there for, Lordy knows,
Much 'fore Gab'rul's trumpet blows!—
Then 's the time you feel your mouth
Sort o' droppin' towards the South,

Homesickness

An' you 'd give your chance for wings
Jist to see ol' folks an' things—
Trumpet vines an' ivy too,
Twistin' round the heart of you!

Head it off! Pull down your vest!
Gallivant off farther West
Manful-like, as if it wa'n't
Nowheres near so long a jaunt
From your home; but presently
Every dad-burned tree you see
Is the "weepin' willow" kind,
Sort o' havin' *you* in mind!
Whipperwills sing sadder there—
Lonesomer—than ennywhere!
'Til at last you simply *durn*
Dobbses' Patent Dashless Churn,
Plank your heart an' wallet down
"*What 's the fare to Morgantown?*"

THE VILLAGE TINKER.

WITH the solemn service through,
What 's the village goin' to do?—
Who 'll the folks depend upon,
Seein' Billy Harper 's gone?

.

Nothin' in the man would strike
Anyone oncommonlike,
'Cept his hands—from "heel" to tip
Marked the natcherl craftmanship,
Like they *is* some hands that *do* !
An' his eyes was special, too—
Hazel eyes, as keen an' jus'
Stiddy as his drawshave was!
Then his mouth, that allus 'peared
Puckered 'round some tune he 'd heerd
Jus' a part of an' was glad
Whistlin' the stock he *had* !

"*Jack* of trades," as sayin' is,
'Ceptin' that *all* trades was his;
Made a leg for Cap'n Ayres
So's't he wore his pants in pairs
All his days; an' I allow
Nary reaper, thresher, plow,

The Village Tinker

Nothin' else around these parts,
Ain't responded to his arts!
Made a music-box for niece—
Played that ol' "Blue Danube" piece
On a catridge, prob'ly some
Soldier brought when he come home.

Got a sort o' plan in min'
For the Bibbs boy's crooked spine.
"Get some hick'ry," he-says-he,
"Somethin' soft, that would n't be
Harsh enough t' galled the skin,
Make a cast an' bind him in!"
Made it too, but land o' love,
Lopped his finger off above
Second joint, an' gangrene set
'Fore the naybors folks could get
News of it—an' there he lay
J'st enough of breath to say:
"Bend more *in* than *out* an' then
Bet you he 'll grow well again!"

.
Now he 's dead an' burrit too,
What 's the townsfolks goin' t' do?—
Wait, I s'pose, till somethin' brings
Someone else to tinker things,

EVERYONE—BUT MOTHER.

SUNDAY, at our house, we
Have all sort of rompin'—
Father an' the twins an' me
Ist go trompin'—trompin'—
Berryin' an' gettin' posies,
Hackberries an' these wild roses—
Yes, an' chase each other!—
Ist the bestest time there be,
Everyone—but mother.

Nen comes dinner time, we
Ist all eat until it
S'prises father—he can't see
How we never spill it!
Ist pie-plant an' berry pie,
Jelly tarts an' such—O my,
We ist race each other,
Eatin' 'til we most can't see,
Everyone—but mother.

Nen, when dinner's done, we
All go off a-sleepin'
Underneath the maple tree,
Where they 's shadows creepin'

Everyone—But Mother

'Cross our faces—one that 's *near*,
When we wake is over *here*,
And they ist chase each other!
Nen we 're rested as can be,
Everyone—but mother.

When comes night, we set
All around the table,
Pickin' at the bones we et
Long as we are able;
Nen we set on mother's knee—
"Story time," that is, and she
Tells one after t' other,
'Til we 're 'sleep an' ist forget
Everyone—but mother!

THE KNACK OF RHYME.

IF I persessed the knack of rhyme
Sich as poet chaps possess,
I would n't spend a jot o' time
Rhymin' things that *they* confess!
Would n't soar all about
'Til my wings was tired out,
Like a Junebug's is that flew
Further than he meant t' do.

It 'pears t' me if I could rhyme
Really rhyme—like poets does,
Instead o' seekin' heights sublime,
Here I 'd stay where beauty was,
Settin' words t' homely things,
Themes of everyday, that sings
In a meter swingin' free
'Thout no help from you or me.

I 'd lift the lily's head an' look
In her eyes, an' *say* as much—
An' rhyme the sparklin' dew that shook
Off her when she felt my touch—
Ask her 'bout the message she
Brings t' folks like you an' me;
Then, t' sort o' change the screed,
Sing about a jimson weed!

The Knack of Rhyme

I 'd tromp the medders all day long
Rhymin' Nature's "Howdy-do!"
An' ketch the kill-dee's sassy song
Comin' cross the fields t' you—
Rhyme snake fences, cricks an' grass,
Hollyhocks an' garden sass—
Things we love an' cherish, ner
Never need excuses fer!

If I could rhyme I 'd scorn the things
Poets choose, of lofty brands,
I 'd put my songs t' homely things,
Things that pore folks understands—
Things God made an' meant t' be
Jist fer folks like you and me—
Spread 'em at our feet an' said:
"Here 's My best; be comforted."

A COUNTRY-SIDE LOVER'S CONFESSION.

I 'VE allus held it as a fact that, taken by an' through,
The pathway that the children take is safe for
me an' you—

For any way their footsteps lead is purty apt t' be
Devoid of snares an' pitfalls an' deceit especially.

An' I suppose that 's how it comes that I meander
down

To Angeliny Hoover's house at t'other end of town
Most every other night or so, pursuant to my creed
Of feelin' safe when follerin' where children's
footsteps lead.

The house is sort o' bias-ed as a carpenter would say,
All covered up with roses that skedaddle every
way,

As if they 'd been stampeded by the rush the children
make

On Angeliny's ginger-bread an' cookies an' her
cake.

She ain't adzackly widdered 'cause she was n't never
wed;

"She 's jist been sort o' single" as the nayburs
allus said,

80 A Country-Side Lover's Confession

"Since Gettysburg," an' spent her time in provin'
in her way
That wiminfolks are loyal as the menfolks any
day.

She 's spent her time in provin' that the creed she
reckons best
Is that which makes the children an' herself the
happiest—
That friedcakes, gems or cookies or an 8x11 slice
Of bread an' jell are better than the hullsomet
advice.

An' lately I have followed where the children's foot-
steps led,
An' gorged my tarnal wizen with Miss Hoover's
cake an' bread;
Like children, I 've been beggin' an' a-pullin' at her
hem,
Until she says I 'm purty nigh pestiferous as them!

FINDIN' FAULT.

“WE 'VE had enough of winter time!” the
medders seem t' sigh;

The woodlot makes the same complaint that medders
do, an' then

Forever like it had the knack of speech, like you an' I,
All Nature hollers somethin' like a Methodist
“Amen!”—

We 've had enough of winter time t' last 'til crack o'
doom—

We hanker after summer with its singin' birds an'
bloom.

“We 've had enough of winter time” the orchard
trees declare,

As plain as if a tree could talk the same as me an'
you!—

An' seems t' sigh most human-like to feel the chubby,
bare,

Brown legs of boys caress their sides like what they
used t' do;

“We 've had enough of winter time! We want to
blossom sweet,

An' litter up the ground with fruit for boys and girls
to eat.”

"I 've had enough of winter time!" I swan, it seems
to me

The ellow tree beside the house is tryin' hard to coax;
I reckon that it sorrows like a body does to see
The swing a-hangin' empty 'stid of piled with little
folks!

"I 've had enough of winter time, of cold an' winter
sky—

I 'm happiest when the children play at 'Let the
old cat die'."

"We 've had enough of winter!" Everything aroun'
the farm,

From hired hands to ginny hens, has got the same
idees!

Then like as not, as if it heard, the sun 'll come out
warm

An' melt the snow an' discontent as easy as you
please!—

An' seems to say, "Well, if you 're set on Summer
time ag'in,

Majority will have to rule—I 'll do the best I kin!"

PRACTICAL PIETY.

I AIN'T, nor never said I be,
Much posted on theology,
Nor take no stock in learned prayers
Like lots o' people fashion their's,
'Til angels, spite of boundless love,
Jest could n't make no record of!
An' yet there 's lots of things I know
'Cause daily life has proved 'em so.

The prosperest man I know, an' jest
The godliest an' piousest,
Has made a creed t' fit his plan;
"God, make me love my feller man,"
An' whilst his faith is firm an' true,
An' as perscribed by preachers, too,
He keeps an eye, I rise t' state,
On grocerymen for *sand* an' *weight*.

"Make all Thy creatures love me," is
Another prayin' creed of his,
An' yet he 's just as scarce as I 'm,
Around a team in hoss-fly time!—
Nor never takes no chances, friend,
Around a barn-mule's business end—
An' in his creed they ain't a thing
For humorin' a hornet's sting.

Practical Piety

I ain't, nor don't suppose that he,
Is posted on theology,
An' yet his creed an' ways an' all
Electioneers the *practical*!
He never bargains, when he prays,
For nothin' more than reason says,
An' consequences is, of sich,
The man I know 's alive an' rich!

IN PRAISE OF UNCLES.

WE 'RE generally truthful, their mother an' me—
“They profit by parents' examples,” says
she;

But times when their uncle comes down for a spell,
He ain't so pertikler 'bout truthfulness—well,
It 's 'cause he 's a bachelor, I reckon, an' law,
Of all the shinnanigan you ever saw
Or heard of, falls short of his lyin', a heap!—
Why, even invention, I reckon, feels cheap!

An' here 's how he goes: “All you younguns come
here,

An' gather around by the side of my cheer;
I 've had the all-firedest, wonderfulest dream!—
A dream about fairies a-straddle a beam
Of sunshine that spilled 'em right out on the ground,
On a spot where there 's Lollypop trees all around,
'Way off in the South where the fairyfolk goes
Because they can't live in our blizzards an' snows;
An' there they was rompin', with nary a thing
To do but git fixed to come back in the Spring!
There 's big ones and little ones, lean ones an' fat,
With hummin' birds' feathers all stuck in their hat,
An' pearls that showed in their mouths when they 'd
grin,

An' fellers with thistle-down beards on their chin;

A squidgy old chap was a-mendin' his face—
Some younguns was drivin' a tumble-bug race—
An' one little runt was improvin' his chance
With cobweb an' needle by patchin' his pants;
An' two that was twenty times weenty as you
Was splashin' each other with drippin's of dew,
Whilst one little chap takes his sweetheart and skips
Away an' gits honey all over his lips!
An' that was the way that they put in the day,
A little of workin' an' plenty of play,
'Til all of a sudden they skedaddled an' law,
'T was worstest confusion that ever you saw;
An' a little old feller an inch or so tall,
Who seemed like he might be the boss of 'em all,
Called: 'Squid-jum-co'-squee! Come saddle your
 bees,
Before long the green will be back in the trees!'"

.

. . . . An' ma, she-says-she:

"What can you expect that them younguns will be
By the time they grow up, if you tell 'em such lies?"

"As good as their uncle, we hope!" I replies.

LITTLE "MISS P'TEND."

ONCE I went where muver said I mus' n't ever go,
We live in a apartment house an' course we
never know

Who folks be lives next to us, an' muver always say
P'haps they ain't our equals so us better stay away;
Once I did n't mind her though, an' went "p'tendin'
call"

All alone, to all the doors an' tapping on them all!
Once a man come to the door an' telled me "Howdy-
do."

'Nen he fold his arms an' say, "My gracious, who be
you?"

"Me," I say, "I 'm jes' p'tend I 'm callin' on my
friend."

'Nen he laugh an' say, "Come in, my little Miss
P'tend!"

"My," I say, "I dess you ain't been very spry today—
You ain't got your work done up like muver has!"

I say;

'Nen he laugh an' say' "Ho, ho, that makes no
diff'rence for

No one ever calls on me—I 'm 'ist a bachelor";

O, we had the mostest fun that ever there can be,

Lookin' at his picture books an' fings he showed to
me;

Little "Miss P'tend"

Taked me on his knee, he did, an' patted down my
curls

'Cause, he said, he 's very fond of little bits o' girls;
Ast me would I 'splain to him, since he 's my truly
friend,

How the little childruns play the game of "Let 's
P'tend."

"Let 's p'tend," I say to him, "that you don't live
alone—

Let 's p'tend you live with us, and I 'm your very
own—

Let 's p'tend my muver runs a race with me to see
Which of us can kiss you first when you come home to
tea;

Let 's p'tend it 's after tea an' time for bed an' you
Tell me bestest stories like my papa always do;
Let 's p'tend you hug me tight an' kiss me on my
curls

'Cause you feel so bad for folks without no little girls;
Let 's p'tend—" —an' 'nen I stop because he walked
away,

Something had got in his eye an' hurted him, he say.

'Ist when he come back again an' taked me on his
knee,

Down where our folks live I hear my muver callin'
me!

'Nen I telled the Bach'lor Man I dess I 'd runned
away

An' I dessed it was n't fashionable to make no longer
stay.

Muver say she 's sorry at her child can't understan'
 Little folks had never ought to interrup' a man;
 "Ho," he say, "he 's awful glad to have so nice a
 friend
 Call on him an' talk to him as Little Miss P'tend!"

.

'Nen when we go 'way I see his chin 'ist wrinkle!
 Why
 'Ist like what us childrun's does when we want to
 cry!

THE FIRST SORROW.

THE first we knew of sorrow! How it all comes
back

When oft we turn, in fancy, on the old back-track,
By pathways through the pasture and the dark,
dense wood,
That led us to the clearing where the schoolhouse
stood.

The handbell calls the children to their tasks again,
A dozen little women and as many small men;
And 'cross the aisle beyond me, to believe my eye,
I catch a glimpse of girlhood through the years gone
by.

A fleeting glimpse of girlhood, with a sad sweet face,
That now I know was with us just by God's good
grace;
And while I sit and ponder and my dream leads on,
The vision seems to vanish and the face is gone.

I sense the dread of something, the vacant seat
And the whispered conversations in the noon's re-
treat,
The teacher's perturbation, and the little ones'
stare,
And all the air of mystery 'round the vacant seat
there.

The handbell calls the children and with tear-dimmed
eye
The teacher then dismissed us with a reason why;
And two by two we marshaled through the long green
lane—
A world of golden Springtime wet with April rain.

It all comes back! The sorrow and the deep, dank
gloom,
And some one sobbing—weeping—in the spare front
room,
The preacher's words to "Suffer little ones to come to
me,"
The spell of death—the wonder—and the strange
mystery!

The handbell calls the children to their tasks again,
Eleven little women and a dozen small men,
Who wandered to their places, all with lagging
feet,
And seemed to step more softly by the vacant seat.

Her seatmate seemed so lonely! And a neighbor's
child took
The orphaned slate and pencil and the dog-eared
book;
The morning prayer was longer, too, and every one
tried
To hide the tears and sorrow, and the teacher
cried!

The First Sorrow

The first we knew of sorrow! How it all comes back
When oft we turn, in fancy, on the old back-track!
And though it 's touched not lightly since we 're
 women and men,
Ah, Sorrow never made a deeper scar than then!

“SILENT JOE.”

HE never was much of a man t' talk—we know
him as “Silent Joe”;
He come t' town in the spring—or fall?—along with
a circus show;
Had a wife when he struck the town—
Animile trainer—an' *him* a clown,
The laughablest feller you ever saw or ever you 'd
care t' know!
They pitched their tents on the circus lot t' the left
o' that little rise,
An' played the tricks that a circus does—the foolin'
that jist defies
Blues, an' tickled our little town,
Specially him that was playin' clown,
But nobody saw all the woes he had an' the tears in
his laughin' eyes.

The woman was sort o' consumed-like—her trouble
was written clear!
He helped her onto the stage that night—or carried
her purty near!
Kissed her twict on the for'h'd, then
Locked her into the animile den,
An' he went back t' the circus ring t' peddle his
jokes an' cheer.

"Silent Joe"

It rained that night like it allus does when circuses
come t' town—

The thunder rolled an' the lightin' flashed an' worter
come beatin' down;

There in the tent by the flashin' light,

He kep' her side through the stormy night,

But the woman died in the feller's arms—*an' the rest
of the show went on!*

He kep' his watch 'til the mornin' come and tenderly
held his dead,

Then asked for a spot "where the grass was green an'
the skies blue overhead";

"Some place that 's purty," he says-says-he,

"Like she knowed 'fore she come with me";

An' chose a grave in a wildrose patch "because it 's
like her," he said;

An' here he 's staid since that stormy night—we know
him as "Silent Joe"—

He never is much of a talkin' man, nor specially
jokeful, though

Fellers that saw him that circus day

Playin' the clown for the younguns, say

He 's laughablest feller you ever saw or ever you 'd
care t' know!

JEALOUSY.

'ERE 'S little Thomas Tupper, he
Ain't more'n half as big as me,
An' he's got double-jointed toes
An' thumbs like folks in circus shows.

An' Tommy Tupper's hair don't fit,
'Cause he can take an' wiggle it
'Ist back an' forth—an' for a pin
He 'll wiggle both his ears, he kin!

An' when he say: "Look out for me!"
You best look out for him, 'cause he
'Ist straddles you, an' 'fore you know
He makes up faces at you—*so*!

An' once he dropped his jack-knife down
Behind his feet an' bend aroun'
An' git it with his teeth; that 's ist
The same like real contortiomist!

An' that 's the way he waste his time
"'Ist foolishly," maw says, an' I 'm
Surprised, 'cause like enuff he won't
Growup to be no Pres-i-dunt!

ANGELINY KERR.

THERE 'S times the parson soars on the things
that 's goin' t' be

Across the River Jordan in the Land Eternal; he
Paints real enticin' pitchers of the angels fur an' near,
All totin' harps and fiddles that they 're playin' on
by ear;

I look acrosst the meetin' house at Angeliny Kerr,
An' settle back an' close my eyes an' try t' pitcher
her

A-playin' on a golden harp, an' flyin' like a pigeon—
I swanny, it comes mighty nigh a-bustin' my religion!

Her voice is sort o' all wore out an' skeersly strikes
a chord—

Her hands are gnarled from workin' in the vineyard
of the Lord—

Her face is wrinkled, pore an' old an' furrowed up
with care,

Yit underneath the mask of age a smile is allus there;
But good as what I know she is, it 's hard t' pitcher
her

A-flyin' with the angel flocks—ol' Angeliny Kerr!—
It 's more like her t' stay behind—work day an' night,
a-tryin'

T' patch and mend the wore-out duds fer other folks
t' fly in!

There ain't a place the kentry 'round where sorrow's
up an' lit,
That 'Liny ain't been on the spot alleviatin' it!
She 's seen the childern come an' grow, an' heerd 'em
laugh an' shout,
An' more 'n likely crossed their hands an' helped t'
lay 'em out;
She 's won her way t' Glory's throne where peace an'
rest is at,
But, 'Liny playin' on a harp! I can't imagine that!
She ain't a-goin' t' be so much fer looks up there in
Glory,
But when it comes t' records!—Well, now that's
another story!

THE OLD ROSE DRESS.

BENEATH the eaves where the fragrant bloom
Sweeps back and forth like the player's bow
Across the strings, and the attic room
Is filled with a cadence, soft and low,
Away in the corner, where none may know
A chest is hidden—grown old so soon—
And there, with the treasures of long ago,
The old rose dress of another June.

Her first long dress; for the bride was young,
Her heart was light and her face was fair
The day she buried the gown among
Her cherished things, and she left it there.
Now Time has whitened her raven hair,
And Life sings low in a plaintive tune,
Except when she steals up the attic stair,
To the old rose dress of another June.

Her own have come and her own have gone,
And all have stood 'neath the marriage bell,
Where guests were gathered to bid them on
Their rosied way and to wish them well;
The guests have gone and the silent spell
Has come, that follows the bridal noon,
And found her there, where the tear-drops fell
On the old rose dress of another June.

No man may know of a woman's part
In Life's whole test, nor the tears it brings,
Nor understand how her woman's heart
Is all enwrapped by the little things—
A little worn shoe with its tasseled strings,
A broken slate or a pewter spoon—
And, O, the wealth of the joy that clings
To the old rose dress of another June.

MY SHADDER AND ME.

A -ROAMIN' the fields an' the medders of green
Where Nature sprawls out in the air—
The medders as calm as the still river sheen
An' soft as a sweetheart's hair;
Away from the town an' its noise an' its buzz,
To where things are still as can be;
Why, we seem t' fit in the silence, because
There 's only my shadder an' me.

In climbin' the hills, when we wander away,
I generally lead by a head—
My shadder trails on, but with nothin' to say,
As glum as a calf bein' led!
But when it comes night an' the supper horn sounds,
My shadder would make a man laugh,
The way it starts home'ards by leaps an' by bounds,
An' wins by a length an' a half.

There 's never a word nor a quarrel betwixt
The two of us, ever I see;
There 's never no diff'rence nor spats t' be fixed—
The two of us allus agree.
I foller wherever my fool fancy goes,
An' nuther one ever gets mad—
An' the way we get on in our partnership shows—
Primy facy—my shadder is glad!



"There's only my shadder an' me."

I 've had plenty friends of the humaner kind
That 's apter to quarrel an' fret,
An' hang on a diff'rence of taste or of mind,
An' some of 'em harbor 'em yet!
I 've tried t' get on with 'em all, but I swear
They "Haw" when I want 'em to "Gee,"
An' I have concluded the *tractablest* pair
Of all is my shadder an' me.

AMBITIONS.

WHEN Uncle Dudley visits here—
An' he lives off at Morgantown—
He 's good as boys is, purty near,
To waller with an' romp around!
He ist gets down on mother's rug
On hands an' knees an' creeps about
At "pick-a-back" an' "straddle-bug"
Until he 's 'pletely tuckered out!
An' when he 's rested, by an' by,
He pats my head an' says he won't
Be bit surprised if some day I
Turn out to be the Presidunt!

An' my aunt Mary 's ist so prim
An' purty, 'cept she's got mustache,
An' lives in Morgantown with him—
She tells him 'at he 's talking *trash*,
'Cause that ain't what I 'm goin' to be,
An' hopes when time for choosin' comes
'At I 'll perfer *The-o-lo-gy*
An' preach for Presbyteriums;
An' pa ist laughs as hard 's he can,
An' says that he 'll be glad—an' more—
If I ist be a honest man,
An' own a bank or grocery store.

An' when they 've gone away I go
 Behind the barn an' take my pup,
 An' mebbe stay a hour or so,

An' shut my teeth an' double up
 My fists an' say: "I won't! *I won't!*"

Be minister when I get grown,
 Ner honest man ner Presidunt!"

I 'll run away all soul alone
 When I get big—an' then they 'll cry!

I 'll take my pup an' gun an' sled,
 An' go 'way off somewhere an' buy
 A mer'-go-round all painted red!

THE MISER.

AT the end of the day when from labor and toiling
I 've stolen apart,
I measure my wealth like a miser from standards Love
placed in my heart,
My riches I count by a table 't was fashioned by
parents of old—
The words of my oldest are silver, the little one's
prattle is gold;
Their big lustrous eyes are but diamonds, their teeth
are the finest of pearls,
And all of my fortune 's invested in one little boy and
my girls!
And more than their smiles and their laughter, a
treasure more priceless than all,
Is the lingering print of their kisses and the patter
of feet in the hall.

The soft spoken prayer from the bedroom, the plea
they are lisping above
To One who is friend to the children, to watch over
those whom they love,
The whispered good-night and the play-spell, the
silvery laugh and their glee,
All this is but part of the interest on wealth that 's
been given to me!

The gold of a monarch is sordid and soiled with the
greed of his hands,
'T will buy him a crown and its jewels and gain for
him power and lands,
Yet cannot buy love of the children nor purchase him
treasure like this—
The patter of feet on the stairway and the lingering
print of a kiss.

BEN TARR ON "BEARIN' THE CROSS."

" I 'VE never had no cross t' bear";
You meet such people now an' then,
Who 've never had no fret er care
T' harry 'em like other men—
No tears er woes;
But Lordy knows
I pity 'em, where'er they air,
Who 've never had no cross t' bear!

You 've never had no cross t' bear?
Then you don't know ner understand
The gentleness of Him up There,
Ner 'preciate this pleasant land
You 're livin' in;
You best begin
T' bear a cross an' then y' 'll see
How thankful mortal man kin be!

You 've never bore no cross, y' say?
Well, then I take it, friend, that you
Have had no clouds t' drift away
An' let the sun come shinin' through
Like sunbeams kin,
A-whisperin'
That trubble 's gone away an' then
It 's time fer you t' smile again.

You 've never had no cross t' bear?
No woes er tears er rail distress?
You 've never ast His help Up There,
Ner never felt His tenderness?
It 's so, I s'pose,
But Lordy knows
I pity you, where'er you air,
Who 've never had no cross t' bear!

A PICTURE IN THE WORTER.

WHEN little fellers stoop t' drink
Ol' fashioned way—*without no cup!*—
I wonder, don't they stop t' think
About the face that 's peerin' up?

I wonder, don't they look behind
The ol' straw hat an' happy smile,
Ner have no thought of enny kind
About the wrinkles *afterwhile*?

Behind the picture, young an' fair,
I wonder don't they ever see
Another one a-hidin' there,
Of ol' baldheaded chap like me?

THE TREASURE CHESTS.

IN an old-fashioned room at the head of the stair
Was a box of old treasures, and hidden in there
Was a little print book and a quaintly marked slate,
A little worn shoe that was minus its mate,
A whistle and spool and a tangle of string,
An odd little bell that was minus its ring.
O 't was many a treasure was hidden in there—
In the red cedar chest at the head of the stair!

In the days of our childhood, before we could know,
It was ever beyond us why mother should go
And kneel by the side of the red cedar chest,
And press the worn shoe and the slate to her
breast—
Why sorrow and weeping should sadden the whiles,
The face we knew better in motherly smiles!
And today we know why! It was ages ago,
In the days we were young and before we could know.

But today we are older, with burdens and cares,
And with hearts' understanding of motherhood's
prayers;
We know that the hardest of battles that come
Are not the ones fought to the tap of the drum,

The Treasure Chests

But those that are waged in the sadness and gloom
When motherhood kneels in an old-fashioned
room!—

Why, a half the world's heartaches and sorrows and
cares

Are in old treasure chests at the head of the stairs!

RIGHT HERE T' HOME.

HINES an' ol' Doc Folinsbee,
Chet an' Zack an' Elder Light,
An' the Carter boys—an' me—
Got t' gassin' t' other night
Down t' the store on towns we 'd seed—
Argyfyin' on where we 'd
Ruther live an' hang our pants
If we only had the chance.

Doc says Filadelfy, 'cause
He 's been speshul struck by that
Since the time Centenyul was
Where he went a-visitun at—
“Jist too fine fer mortal praise,
Filadelfy is,” Doc says;
Whilst the oldest Carter—Jim—
Struck on Washin'ton fer him.

Zack's first ch'ice was Terry Hut,
Where his mother's folks live at,
Makin' Magic Skin Salve—but
'Lowed that Springfield's next t' that;
Ol' Bill Hines an' Chet agreed
Omyha 'bout hit their breed;
Elder 'lowed that by and through,
Enny place but here would do!

Right Here t' Home

Then I riz an' I-says-I,
Sort o' hunchin' up my cheer,
"If I have my ruthers, why,
Ruther live an' die right here—
Here where even Junebug's song
'S twict as loud an' twict as long
'S what a Junebug's singin' is
Elsewhere, in this world o' His!

'Right here, where I reckon God
Finished up His work an' cares,
Washed His hands an' smiled as broad
An' as glad as ennywheres—
Sort o' pleased with what He 'd done!—
Swanny, I don't blame Him none!
No sir-e-e, fer *me*, I vum,
Hang *my* pants right here t' hum!"

THE PASSING OF THE CHILDREN.

THE children we love, O where do they go
When tired of play and their tiny bare feet
Turn down the broad road where the butter-cups grow,
And beautiful skies and the meadow lands meet—
All happy and tried, O where do they go,
The children we love, does anyone know?

The children we love, O what do they see
Beyond the bright fields, that calls them away,
That leads the dear children from you and from me
And leaves them no choice but to go and obey;
What vision attracts them, what fate can it be—
What is it, I wonder, that little folks see?

The children we love become women and men—
A toll that Time claims—but in fancy I see
Their shadows, still happy and joyous as when
They romped and they prattled all day at our
knee—
They seek the far fields and the blossoms, and then
They live in the bloom of the flowers again.

THE FISHING TRIP.

“THE preacher goes along today!”
Quoth Dick to Bill and I;
“If you would read your titles clear
To mansions in the sky,
Behave yourself and *do not swear!*”
We promised we would try.

As seemed to us to quite befit
His saintly presence there,
We opened up the fishing trip
With reverential prayer;
And never once did either one
Permit himself to swear!

When Billy lost a “strike” he ’d quote
From Peter or from Paul—
When I got snagged or lost my line
I solace found in Saul,
And parables were mixed that day
With hooks and lines and all.

We plumed ourselves we ’d done so well—
So dignified, sedate—
And had no pangs or vain regrets
’Til afternoon, and late,
*We heard the preacher damn a crab
That pinched off all his bait!*

AS STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM.

THE orneriest feller on No Bizness Crick—
The miser'blest man!—was a feller named Slick,
An' all the cummunity knowed him
For a grumblin' feller that everyone owed;
An' the happiest feller that ever I knowed,
I jocks, was a feller that owed him!

TO A STRANGER.

STRANGE your voice and strange your face,
And strange the eyes that twinkled through,
Yet, in yonder market place
Today, I felt akin to you.

What a cheerful, wholesome smile!
A necromancer's mystic skill,
Scarce could charm and so beguile,
And make a bright day brighter still!

Thank you, friend, for being here,
And thank you for your snatch of song,
Thank you, for your bit of cheer,
And for the smile you passed along.

Little things? Ah, you forget
The hosts of men who know them not—
The thoughts of them will linger yet
When creeds and dogmas are forgot!

THE STAGE THAT RUNS OVER TO PIKE.

(Celebrating a certain lecture engagement extraordinary.)

OUT on the Lecturer's Circuit where potluck the
rarest obtains,
Out where the fees are contingent on trifles like bean
crops and rains,
There lie the faraway hamlets where people all hunger,
't is said,
After mere driblets of wisdom (at a quarter and fifty
a head)
There lies the goal of the "talent"—by carry-all,
auto and stage
They bear the uplifting message that brightens a
Stygian age!—
Going by every conveyance, but of all there is none
of them like
 The rickety, ambling,
 Swaying and shambling
 Stage that runs over to Pike!

Once have I traveled by airship, once in a litter-like
chair,
Once I was toted by Mongols in a sort of a hammock
affair;

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Once did I go by the Erie (and once was quite ample
for mine!)

Once I have sensed the discomforts of the Jaffa-
Jerusalem line.

All of these lines I have mentioned were sufficiently
cursed by the fates—

Some were most horribly smelly while others had flat
wheels or waits;

All had the charms of discomfort, but believe me,
there 's none of them like

That rickety, rattling—

Maxim or Gatling?—

Stage that runs over to Pike!

Where was the Goddess of Humor when the stage
driver bore me away—

Where were the frivolous Muses?—all soundly
sleeping I pray,

Else how they 'd snickered and tittered and giggled
in feminine glee,

Seeing that strange contradiction which the same
contradiction was me,

“Optimist, Poet and Reader; a Lifetime of Sunshine
Distilled

Into a Two Hour Lecture” (for that was the way I
was billed!)

Hunched all up in the stage-coach in a pose that no
Christian could strike,

Damning that ambling,

Swaying and shambling

Stage that runs over to Pike!

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND.

I 'VE seen the painted hobbies in their trappings,
 gay and bright,
Cavorting 'neath the canvas in the Land of Child's
 Delight—
The rearing, tearing horses, with their "Sticky Finger"
 brand,
Awhirl in happy madness to the music of the band;
I 've heard the youngsters' voices and I 've shared
 their childish glee—
I wish the painted hobbies meant a half as much to
 me!

The horse has lost his bridle and the tiger 's weeping
 tears
In sorrow for the zebra that is minus both its ears;
The lion grows ferocious and he seems disposed to
 scoff
Upon the lowly llama 'cause its paint is coming off,
And though they 're all dismantled, and in such a
 woeful plight,
They seem to love the journey to the Land of
 Child's Delight.

The whistle blows the warning, then a pressure of the
 hand—
A little hand like velvet—and away to Happy Land;

The Merry-Go-Round

Away across the meadows to the Realm of Mystery,
A place of gold and tinsel that a grownup cannot see,
To look upon its wonders, and to breathe its beauty
 rare,
Then back again to mother from the happy journey
 there.

When all the fun is over and the evening prayers are
 said—
They 've had their "dink of watty" and the angels
 guard their bed—
I love to watch them sleeping; why, their chubby
 fingers seem
To guide some painted charger through the valleys
 of their dream!
I wonder why they 're smiling and I wonder what
 they see?—
I wish the painted hobbies meant a half as much to
 me!

NO WELCOME.

“O where is the child with the far-away eyes?”
The robin asks, and the groundbird cries
A welcome note 'neath the window ledge,
And sportively hides in the thorny hedge;
The jonquils and the jump-ups speak,
And crave the press of his rosy cheek,
The touch of his hand and his happy smile,
And Spring and its songsters grow still the while
The new world wonders in mute surprise
“O where is the child with the far-away eyes?”

“O where is the child with the far-away eyes?”
The blossoms ask and with heartfelt sighs
They tell how he kissed them with rosebud lips,
Or stroked their heads with his finger-tips;
The orchard blossoms bend low as then,
And look for the glint of his frock again
As once they did when he romped there, and
The whole of his world was the Orchard Land;
The blossoms sorrow—the orchard sighs
“O where is the child with the far-away eyes?”

But never a glimpse of the happy face
Nor answer comes from the lonely place,

No Welcome

And Spring goes mournfully down the lane
In sadness, weeping her Maytime rain,
In quest of better and happier trends
And newer faces and other friends;
Away from the silence, so cold and drear,
Away from all of the sorrow here,
Since God came down from the smiling skies
And asked for the child with the far-away eyes.

THE WAY THE HIRED-MAN DIED.

THE day was bright, and in the golden glint
Of autumn sun that crept across the room
And fell away, there was no thought or hint
Of pending death; nor anything of gloom
Around the house, save in the maples tall,
A mournful sound, like sighing—that was all.

The sheepdog curled up on the kitchen sill
And paid no heed to travelers who went
Along the road; the evening herd stood still
Around the bars in dumblike wonderment,
And mused, perhaps, in that half-human way
That creatures have, upon so strange a day.

The sufferer lay upon the spare-room bed,
His face deep bronzed against the spotless white,
And mother sat and cooled the fevered head,
Or eased his fears against the Endless Night—
And once she bowed and whispered soft, "My boy!"
He heard—and smiled—with nigh a holy joy.

And once—once only—came a spoken word,
'T was when the clock upon the mantle shelf
Struck even'time; the patient sufferer heard
The solemn knell and slowly raised himself
Upon his bed, and said, with vacant stare:
"The supper-bell! Tell mother I'll—be—there——"

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Then evening came, a gentle shadow fell

 Across the sill—from out the twilight dim

A voice spoke out and broke the silent spell—

 A spirit voice that softly summoned him;

“It ’s growing dark—they ’re singing there!” he
 cried,

 “The harvest’s done—I ’m—going—now”—and
 died!

HE USED TO BE A JOURNALIST HIMSELF.

THERE 'S a Pythian sort of friendship that exists
between the men

Who earn their bread by writing for the press;
'T is a hyper-magic feeling that defies the common
pen—

Akin to Ancient Masonry, I guess!
In the greenroom of the Temple of the Brotherhood
Who Write—

In paths that lead to lasting fame and pelf—
You may often hear the password as it rings upon the
night:

“I used to be a journalist myself!”

'T is a key that opens prisons, and the dungeons of the
soul,

Those simple words that make the two akin,
And the writer greets the stranger and he leads him
to the goal

Where fellowship abounds and bids him in;
Then across the shining table they recount the tales
that stir—

Unsparringly the host deals out his pelf,
For he knows the guest is thirsty when those golden
words recur:

“I used to be a journalist myself!”

Ah, the test of life is friendship! I have found it ever
so;

I 've heard the mystic password in the strife—
I have taken in the stranger and I 've seen the
stranger go—

The very saddest moments of my life!
And my sorrow only freshens, if indeed my sorrow
can,

As, misty-eyed, I see upon the shelf
All the "I. O. U.'s" they left me—each the relic of a
man

Who "used to be a journalist himself!"

OLD SWAN STREET.

WHEN high over all, in the belfry, the chimes
sing the end of a day,
And roar and rumble of traffic sound farther and
farther away,
Then night draws her mantle of romance and high in
the shop and the Square,
Like eyes of old lovers, forgotten, the lights twinkle
over them there;
It 's then I see shadow meet shadow and phantoms
hold sway in the street,
I hear the sweet songs of the lovers and tread of the
daintiest feet,
And down through the years they come courting, as
only those old lovers could,
The belles and the beaux of the city when life and its
living were good.

The belles and the beaux of the Sixties! They come
through the old-fashioned street,
A shadowy, phantom procession with laughter so
silently sweet—
Young knights in toppers and strolling with courtly
and dignified stride,
Who bend with loving attention to old-fashioned
maids by their side;

Then softly, as if by some magic, the shades of a
summer's night steal,
And, hark, comes the music of dancing, the old-
fashioned schottish and reel—
Ah, dance, you sweet phantoms and shadows that
vie with the starlight above,
As once you did here in your mansions—aye, danced
on the heart of your love!

But hold, drowning music and laughter, there comes
the shrill scream of the fife,
And calls from the brass-throated trumpet that sum-
mon your lovers to strife!
I see in my fancy the phalanx move out to the drum's
hollow beat,
And pass, with a rising and falling, like waves, out
the old-fashioned street.
A word and a tear at the parting, a prayer that the
Master might save,
And grief that was buried the deeper lest sight of it
weaken the brave!
Ah, belles of the war-clouded Sixties, when life and
its living were new,
Did you rear daughters whose children have hearts
that are loyal as you?

The Night draws her mantle of romance and high
in the shop and the Square,
Like eyes of old lovers, forgotten, the lights twinkle
over them there!

I see the bronzed soldiers returning and loves are
united again

To live a new peace and a battle—be fathers and
mothers of men;

Then ends my musing and dreaming—the shadows
cease flitting about—

The knights, so gracious and courtly, are bowing
their mistresses out—

Then, lo, the long arms of the dawning, reach out
from the East to the West,

And chimes of the rose-tinted morning ring belles
and beaux to their rest.

THE STOREKEEPER SAYS:

RED WHISKERED DOWNS, who lived here
for a spell,

Was an odd sort o' feller as human folks run—
Chewed so much finecut that folks could n't tell

Where his whiskers left off an' terbacker begun!
Used t' come in when he lived around here

An' hark to the boys gas of science an' law—
Never said nuthin'—jist tipped back his cheer,
An' half closed his eyes an' done nothin' but chaw.

Boys done a lot of palaverin' that Fall;
They settled what Congress had orter o' done—
Found that the tariff wa'n't equal at all—
An' even went back onto Sixteen to One!
Argued on creeds an' on hosses an' pay,
An' politics, science an' butter an' law!—
Red Whiskered Downs had n't nuthin' to say—
Jist half closed his eyes an' done nuthin' but chaw!

Squeers got t' banterin' an' pickin' on Downs,
Remarkin' he had n't said nary a word
All winter long on the "pros" an' the "cons,"
At least if he had Mister Squeers had n't heard;

Downs sort o' shuffled an' allowed Squeers was right,
An' shifted his cud, an' he says, with a nod:

"I 'm from Vermont where it was n't perlite
T' make so much noise when y' chew"—an' he
chawed!

A PLEA IN THE NIGHT.

A T night when the shadows creep over the wall
And the stars through the windows are peeking,
And Fancy so noisily stalks through the hall
With O, such a terrible squeaking!
From the little white bed peers a little shorn head,
And parents alone understand
The wee little plea,
Such a wee little plea:
“Father—dear father—take hold of my hand!”

A God-given privilege to gather them close
And quiet their child trepidations;
The faith and the trust of the little ones—those
The greatest of Life's compensations;
When father is near them to banish their fear
They return to their Babyhood Land!
Lisping their plea,
Such a wee little plea:
“Father—dear father—take hold of my hand!”

Then back to my pillow to watch and to rest,
To thinking and dreaming, though waking,
How men of today are but children at best
And children but men in the making;

Some far distant night we shall grope for the light
On the way to a Wondrous Land,
And, trustingly, we
Shall utter their plea:
“Father—dear Father—take hold of my hand!”

IN THE PLAY CORNER.

I SELDOM think about it in the daytime, but at night,
With all the children sleeping and the dancing fire-light
Describing friendly shadows on the walls and all about,
I 'm apt to fall to musing and my feelings find me out;
My eyes rove here to yonder, from old trophies,
pictures, books,
To favored chairs and corners and to old familiar nooks,
And then, by inclination seem to seek the corner far—
He always says "his corner"—where his tattered playthings are.

O, what a store of treasures to enrich a poet's pen!
O, what a wealth of loving for a world of lonely men!
What joy for those whose vision is a child of Long Ago,
And O, what thoughts for others who have had no child to know?

.
His woolly dog, his pensioned horse, his sheep no longer bleats,
His Christmas drum, long since succumbed to his too ardent beats,

The wheelless cart and paintless blocks, and story-
book and ball,
And, best of all, his presence and his thumbprints over
all!

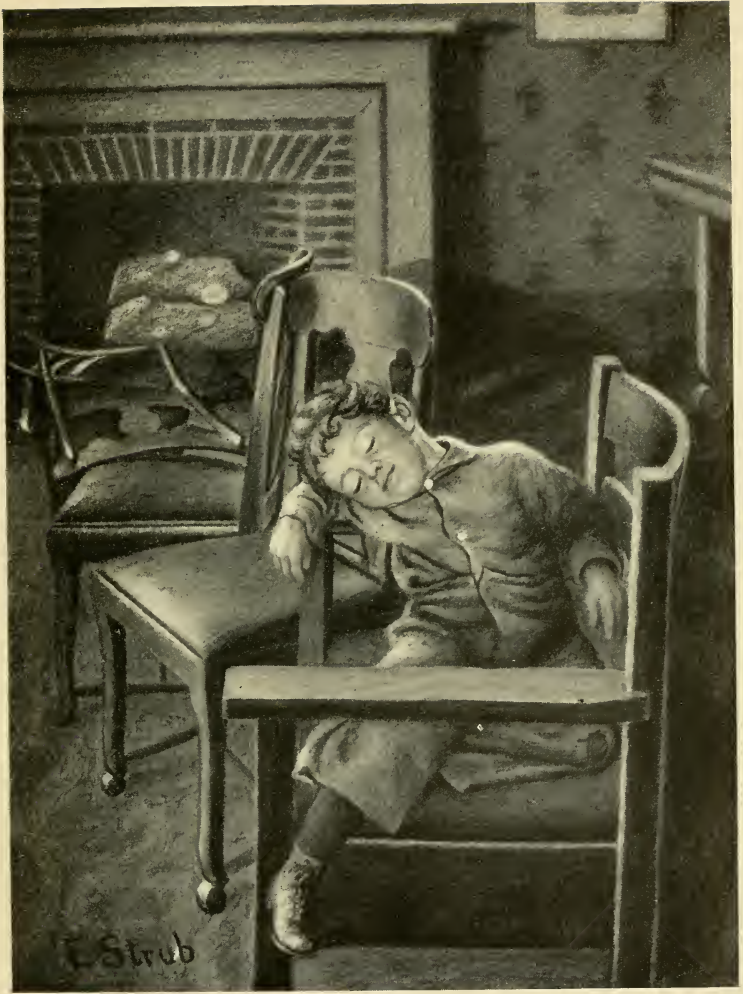
I seldom think about it in the daytime, but at night
My pleasure is in musing in the mellow firelight,
Until one vagrant shadow of the others 'roundabout
Falls strangely 'cross the doorway and it seems to
lengthen out
To quite the height of manhood! Ah, it speaks a time
to come
When childish glee and laughter shall be stilled within
the home—
When Time shall take his playthings from the corner
place he knew,
And I shall be so lonely, and—well, he 'll be lonely too!

A WONDER JOURNEY.

THERE 'S a Wonderful Train on a Wonderful
Line that runs to a Wonderful Town,
And it gets under way with its clatter and noise after
the sun settles down;
Its journey lies far o'er the valleys and hills and along
by the tinkelty streams,
And comes to an end in the quietest way in the
Wonderful Station of Dreams.

It has a conductor, a curly-head boy, and he is the
engineman, too,
And he is the stoker, and trainman and all who pilot
the Wonder Train through;
He 's baggage man, agent and news butcher too, and
sleeping-car porter as well,
And airbrake and sandbox and everything else—and
he 's his own whistle and bell!

The train is made up of the dining-room chairs with
a library chair up ahead—
So staunch and secure a train I am sure not even the
timid would dread;
Its time-table varies yet oddly enough its schedule
does n't annoy
Its passenger list which always consists of One Little
Curly-Head Boy!



When the wonderful train on the Wonderful Line has left
for the Wonderful Town.

It gets under way with much clatter and noise, but
the track is so smooth and so clear
That scarcely the engine puffs out of your sight ere
never a sound can you hear;
And O, but how silent the house seems to get! and O,
how our spirits go down
When the Wonderful Train on the Wonderful Line
has left for the Wonderful Town!

CHRONICLES OF THE YOUNGEST.

ONCE my father could n't find
His ol' tackle box behind
Our tool chest, ner in the case
Where he kep' it—*anyplace!*

He ist look an' look an' look,
Into ever' corner, nook,
Spot an' cranny, everywhere—
All he say was ist "I swear!"

When he pulled most all our stuff
Out o' place an' puff an' puff
Ist like engines, nen my pa
Ist set down an' hollers "*Ma!*"

Nen my ma she hunted too,
An' she say she wish she knew
'Nuff to let his things *stay* hid,
An' pa says "he wish she '*did!*'"

Bimeby my ma found that
Box ist where he put it at,
An' my pa say, "Well, I swear!
That 's no place fer tackle—*there!*"

Nen my pa an' ma don't speak
Nice no more for most a week,
'Til my pa forgive her, nen
Both of 'em get good again.

“OUT TO OLD AUNT MARY’S.”

(James Whitcomb Riley’s Birthday)

“**O**UT to Old Aunt Mary’s!” I ’ve been dreamin’
that today
I ’ve been reminiscin’ on the folks that ’s gone away
Scattered-like, an’ toiled an’ slaved, an’ now their
toilin’ ’s through,
Long to be back there today to celebrate with you.

“Out to Old Aunt Mary’s”—why, it all comes back
as clear,
P’cisely as you tell it in your homely verses here—
Old woodpath of dimpled dust, an’ with the rain-
drops jest
Patterin’ like teardrops for the boy that loved it
best!

Yes—an’ roads an’ meadows with the sunshine over-
spread
“Thick as country butter on old-fashioned country
bread”
Like you told us in your rhyme—a rhyme that like
as not
Spread its gladness farther than the sunshine ever
got!

Peekin' through the gethered haze of memory I see
 Old Aunt Mary waitin' there like what she used to be,
 Waitin' there to greet you with the very things we 'd
 say

All us boys—*Aunt Mary's boys!*—the years have
 coaxed away.

"Out to old Aunt Mary's!" Why, your simple
 melodies

Live in love an' flowers an' the boomin' of the bees!—
 Everything around there hums the hullsome praises
 sung

By a boy perpetual, from a heart forever young!

WES' HIGGINS' ANALOGY.

“**H**UMAN folks an’ dawgs,” sez Wes’,
“Pears t’ me that them two ’s jes’
Near related—” Wesley wheezes,
“As two common garden peas is!”

“Take my hound-dawg, Drive, now he ’s
Fine example, if y’ please—
Blueblood through an’ through, an’ jes’
Uppish as them bluebloods *is!*”

“Pass ol’ Barton’s dawg, or Tag
Thurber’s hound *without a wag,*
Twitch or nothin’, no sir-e-e-e—
Jes’ as human as could be!

“Got so bimeby that I ’d
Hunt with him, an’ drat my hide,
Bow, an’ tell him ‘Sakes alive,
Much obleeged fer goin’, Drive!’

“T’ other night though, he come in
Dreenched to his eternal skin,
All stuck up with clay an’—shoo!—
Cockleburrs an’ stick-tights too!—

Wes' Higgins' Analogy

"Tail betwixt his legs—the same
Voicin' his etarnal shame!—
Ears lopped down, an' all the sand
He persessed was missin'—and

"Floppered on the floor—kerplunk!—
'*Sociatin' with a skunk!*

.

Layin' side all sorts o' jokes,
Wa'n't that jes' like human folks?"

A HOUND-DAWG.

WE had a hound-dawg once, a yeller cuss,
Without no tail—a ornery little scamp—
That come from nowheres—famblied here with us
Fer quite a spell, an' we all called him “Tramp,”
A name, says-I, so durned appropriate
An' fit, the two jist seemed t' sort o' mate!

His occupation, far as I could see,
Was “Yappin” round at everybody's heels,
Or snappin' at the hired man or me,
Or wimin folks, or ketchin' at the wheels
Of vehicles 't was passin' every day,
An' foller 'em, an' “yappin” all the way!

An' sometimes, when he 'd clear plum out o' sight
An' stay a day or more in yender hills
All soul alone, he 'd limp back home at night
All battered up, an' mouth all full o' quills
Of porcupines; 't was 'cause he 'd stuck his nose
In other folkses' business, I suppose.

Reflectin'-like, it 's given me to see
That dawg was heaps like lots o' folks I know,
Who bark away an' snap eternally,
An' “yap” at folks most everywhere they go,
An' stick their nose in other folks' affairs,
An' git it full o' quills—*an' no one cares!*

THE MASQUERADER.

WHAT is Age? I 've asked myself
A thousand times or more, I guess—
Asked an' asked an' *asked*, untwell 'f

It was n't downright *answerless*
The things that I have asked it of,
The fields an' trees an' skies above,
The clouds that flit an' winds that blow,
Would answered to me long ago!

Is it wrinkles? I have said,
Or when the silver hairs appear,
A-thatchin' up a feller's head
To match the Autumn of the year?—
Or when some dadburned fiddle sails
In "Old Gray Eagle" dance, an' fails
To put the devil in your toe,
Like what it used to years ago?

Ain't it when your eyes appear
To water-like, an' you agree
Summertime ain't nowheres near
As purty as it used to be?—
When bobolinks an' bluebirds is
The worst of noisy nuisances,
Instead of "sweetest birds that sings"
When you was more in tune with things?

What is Age? An' here I 've been
A-askin' that year in an' out,
An' I suppose, like other men
I 've never thought to look about,
'Cause if I 'd only looked around
A little nearer home, I 'd found
The answer written, real an' true
Across the young old face of *you* !

Lookin' at you, I perceive
That Age is nothin' but a mask
Calculated to deceive
Inquirin' folks like me, who ask—
A sort of veil of bronze an' gray
That trys to hide your boyish way,
Perventin' people, seems to me,
From knowin' jist how old you be!

Shaggy brows that hide the glint
Of boyish eyes an' heart to match—
Whiskers, hidin' smiles that hint
Of swimmin' holes an' berry patch!
I would n't trust you, no sir-e-e,
Beyond the closest boundary,
For Age is nothin', I 'm afraid,
But Boyhood on a masquerade!

THE CRICKET.

COME an' gone a hundered nights he 's paid the
hearth a visit,
An' said his say an' shut his mouth as human as
could be—
Mother an' the hired hand a-wonderin' "What is it?"
An' him a-fairly hollerin': "I 'd have you know
it 's me!"

Seemed t' me he allus thought he had a special
mission
To righten things an' straighten out the hull en-
durin' earth—
Hopped from out his hidin' place an' sort o' took
position,
As sayin' is, then scolded from his rostrum on the
hearth.

Raised his voice, oddrot him, in a sort o' obligatter,
An' findin' fault, I reckon, was the burden of his
song;
Seemed as if he hollered: "Don't you wonder what 's
the matter
With everything around ye, an' why everything is
wrong?"

Mebbe for an hour he would spout an' blow an'
bluster

Ferever like reformers, 'til y' could n't doze a
wink—

Hired man got restlesslike an' ma allowed it fussed
her,

An' actually a body could n't hear a body think.

Yet the earth kept movin' an' the pendulum a-
swayin'—

In spite of all his scoldin' everything remained the
same,

'Til he got discouraged an' skedaddled off, a-sayin'

“I 've warned y' now; remember that I ain't the
one to blame.”

When I get to musin' an' the Autumn evenin' finds
me

Philosophizin' mebbe, on the subjects close at
han',

I can scarcely tell y' how the cricket here reminds me
Of other brands of insects better known perhaps
as man!

RANDOM THOUGHTS ON OCTOBER.

LAZY, daisy, hazy days—days of old October,
When the Fall is loafin' 'round solemn-like and
sober,
Tired out with harvestin' an' fat with high-toned
livin',
Like a mortal allus is along before Thanksgivin';
Coat an' vest of red an' gold, britches made of yeller,
Lordy, Old October is imposin' sort o' feller,
Pussy as the sheriff is or the tax collector!
Waitin' for Miss Wintertime? When do you expect
her?

Ringin', singin', tingin' nights, when the fiddle 's
playin',
Barn is fairly weavin' with the boys an' girls a-
swayin';
Summer 's dead an' burrit, too, an' here is all the
mourners,
"Balancin'" an' "hoein' down" an' "swingin' on
the corners";
Older folks is lookin' on from fodder loft or stanchions,
Pityin' the city folks that have to dance in mansions!
Hullsome cheer an' homely fun with silver stars above
it,
Dancin' on the barn floor—Lordy, don't y' love it!

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

I AIN'T, in no point of mind—
 "Pa, where'bouts is Parag'way?"
Prejudist 'ginst womankind—
 "What 's its greatest export, say?"
Only this: all said an' done,
Votin' ain't no woman's fun—
That 's a growed man's job, or none!—
 "Pa, where'bouts is Baffin's Bay?"

Man, in all his wisdom, ort—
 "Pa-say-Pa—what 's longitude?"
Handle problems of that sort!
 "What 's Alaska's staple food?"
Women jist can't never be
'Round the polls for—lawsey me,
Woman, where's your modesty?
 "Pa, what is Potential Mood?"

Leave sich things for men to do—
 "Pa, where'bouts is Aberdeen?"
Men that 's learned through an' through—
 "Which way does the axis lean?"
Men that 's got the knack to see
Things adzackly as they be!
Men that 's wise an'—well, like me!
 "Pa, what 's 'erudition' mean?"

THE SIMPLE SONG.

FOR the song's sake, let it go!
Homely? Yes, but even so,
Does it not, though crude and halt,
Burdened too, by many a fault,
Rhyme the things God meant to bless
With a tender homeliness?

For the song's sake, let it go,
Shrill like Autumn winds, or low
As Maytime's song, and blowing sweet
Apple blossoms at our feet,
Like a zephyr lost its way
From the Orchard Land of May.

For the song's sake, let it go,
Whether it will chime or no;
What, so long as it rings true,
Matters that to me—or you—
Since it strikes such chords as these,
Old-time dreams and memories.

For the song's sake, let it go,
Lilting, if you wish, or slow—
Fit the lines to tears and smiles,
Days gone by or Afterwhiles—
Strive for honest rhymes that fit
Life and all that 's best of it.

Shall we seek the rhymes' alloy?
Shall a child dissect its toy?
Shall we cut and scan and pare
'Til we spoil the beauty there
In the simple measure? No
For the song's sake, let it go!

A MAN'S WAY.

FELLER settin' next t' me
In the restaurant says he:
"Where *you* from?" An' I-says-I
"Pennsylvania;" he says, "Why,
I 'm from Pennsylvania too!"
"Like enuff I 'm kin t' you!"
I-says-I, an' he-says-he:
"Like enuff you are—less see—
Where is your home town?" he says:
"Northern part," says I; "*Great days!*"
He-says-he, "then you must know
Tubbses folks from Jericho,
Crawford County?" I says "Well,
'Course I know em! I 've heerd tell
Lots o' times o' that 'ere name—
Prob'ly fambly's just the same";
"Well, great days, they 're kin o' mine,"
He-says-he "on father's line;
My Aunt Serepty," he-says-he
"She 's been married twice—less see
Yes, *three* times I reckon; drink
Killed the first one off, I think;
Next one, name of 'Lisha Hills,
He tuk sick an' died of chills;
Now she 's marrit widower
Name o' Smith an' older 'n her

Lots, an' his first wife, y' know,
Was a Tubbs from Jericho;
That 's the way,' he says, says he
"*We 're* connected up, y' see!"
"Glad," says-he, "that I came in—
Glad fer chance t' meet my kin!"
An' there we set an' set an' set,
Talked an' joked an' smoked an' et,
Happy, as those folks 'll know
Who have ever had t' go
In strange towns an' set around
Lonesome as a borrowed hound!

THE EGOTIST.

LIDY, she was jist that sot
On Ephram, that—well, I dunno,
She 'd have more than likely got
Him *on the fly*, as like as not,
You know how a story 'll go
When it 's started, I declare,
It gathers somethin' everywhere.

Anyhow, folks here aver
That Lidy 'd set her cap for Eph
Spite of her old dad's "No sir!"
Mother was more tractabler,
An' hinted that she 'd just as lief;
That 's the way the stories go—
That, of course, don't make 'em so.

Well, they caterwauled some more
'Til finally Eph disappeared;
Lidy moped an' cried, an' 'fore
Long got work at Tubbses' store
In Morgantown, an' no one heerd
Where Eph went, an' then, y' see
Things died down jist natcherlly.

Well, along last May—or June—
Her father went t' mill with Red

Hubbard's grist; come home at noon
Whistlin' a different tune;

He 'd had a word from Lide, he said:
"Goin' t' marry some young gent
Fast becomin' prominent!"

Well, you know her father's way—
So tickled that he liked t' died!
Told it everywhere, folks say—
Drove t' Hatcher's Mill one day
T' tell his cousin's folks of Lide;
Meanwhile Lidy's mother, she
Smiled jist sort of *knowin'ly*.

When they come—well, how he fret,
A-struttin there, a reg'lar chief
Bottlewasher!—How he sweat!
Train come in an' the brakes was set
An' the first ones off was Lide—*an' Eph!*
All dressed up an' smilin' too,
Meanin' "What you goin' t' do?"

Him? Pervoked? Well, don't ask *me!*
But there was all the nayborhood
Lookin' on, how could he be?
"Your mother's jedgment," he-says-he
"On *marryin'* was *allus* good!"

.
I don't s'pose that he knows yit
Why we laffed so, fit t'split!

A MAN OF NOTE.

HE lived a life spectacular,
And got what folks called fame—
He found lost arts and gave to each
A scientific name;
He died, and in a niche was placed
And greatly praised was he,
And lauded as a man who built
For Earth's posterity.

But subsequent—a thousand years—
One day there passed that way,
A plodding, plugging college Prof.
Who poked that bed of clay,
Uncovering some gray old bones,
And looking through his glass
The Prof. exclaimed, "Rare find, indeed!
A prehistoric ass!"

THE DEATH OF THE NE'ER-DO-WELL.

JIST "Tug" was the name he went by—a sort of a
fittin' name

That has a sinister bearin' on fellers that wear the
same—

A-meanin' sin an' mischief an' wickedness dark an
grim,

An' everything else that's reckless—an' *that* was
p'cisely *him*.

His troubles was mostly whiskey—he allus was *out*
o' step,

An' when he was in his tantrums the village scarcely
slep'!

Yet here was the only feller of all of the folks at home
Who 'd set with the marshal's childurn when black
dipthery come!

Got drunk one night in August—an' he knocked the
marshal down—

An' stole a hoss—broke winders!—an' purt' nigh
wrecked the town!

A posse went out t' get him an' found him a-ravin'
wild,

Yet he come like a lamb t' feedin at the call of a
little child!

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Struck Trostle down one evenin' after they 'd passed
the word,

An' Trostle never whimpered as any one present
heard!

The ol' Grand Jury sessioned an' agreed on a "self
defense"

An' Tug supported the fambly—with interest—ever
sence!

An' he was the wayward feller that all o' the naybor-
hood

Took only the bad for granted an' never would see
the good—

An' plum fergot his kindness—'til they saw him
yesterday,

His face turned up to Heaven an' his hands crossed
thataway!

An' yesterday was stormy with nary a sun to shine—
The skies was grey—unfriendly—an' the wind jist
seemed to whine,

Or more p'cisely *whimper*, an' it struck me sort o' odd,
Like Tug was hangin' back from a-takin' his soul t'
God!

But today it 's bright an' peaceful, with blue skies
overhead,

The pathways bathed in sunshine, the paths he loved
t' tread—

There 's something sort o' holy, a sort o' *feel* in the
air

That God has acquitted Tug in the High Court over
There!

A SOLDIER'S GRAVE.

THEY laid him away in the orchard; that 's all
that we 'll ever know,
That 's all that his comrades told us an' I 'm kind
o' glad it 's so—
I 'm glad that we don't remember the battle an'
wound an' pain,
But only the grave in the orchard grass
That waves in the blossom rain.

“We laid him away in the orchard” was all that his
comrades said:
Nor give us that lief to sorrow or mourn for our soldier
dead,
But only the pain of partin', the thoughts of his far-
off mound,
An' him with his hands crossed—thataway—
An' the Old Flag wrapped around.

They laid him away in the orchard; that 's mebbe
the reason why
I like to set in the gloamin' in the orchard *here* an'
try
To picture him a-sleepin' in the orchard *there*, the
sound
Of drums an' bugles an' war fergot,
An' the pink bloom all around.

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A Soldier's Grave

That 's why, when it 's Decoration an' the vets tromp
up an' down,

I ruther stay with my *feelin's* an' never go off to
town—

To dream of the place he 's sleepin', the grave 'neath
the flowered limb,

Where every day that the blossoms fall,

It 's Memorial Day for him!

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